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THOMAS, A.L
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ESSAY

ON

THE CHARACTER, THE MANNERS,

AND

THE UNDERSTANDING

OF

WOMEN,

IN DIFFERENT AGES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. ONS. THOMAS,

BY MRS. KINDERSLEY.

WITH

TWO ORIGINAL ESSAYS.

LONDON:
Printed for J. DODSLEY, in Pall Mall.
M.DCC.LXXXI.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT is in general of very little importance to the world, what were the motives which induced an author to write; the motives for tranſlating a book are ſtill leſs intereſting. I ſhall, however, preſume to mention mine, and hope I ſhall be excuſed. They are briefly theſe: I had deſigned to write *Eſſays on the Female Mind*, and had actually compoſed ſome ſheets, when I met with this Eſſay. Upon reading it, I perceived that had I finiſhed and publiſhed my work, agreeably to my firſt intention, it would have been thought an imitation, and, although unjuſtly, have been deemed a plagiariſm from Monſ. Thomas; as I had endeavoured to account for the character and manners of women in different ages and countries, and under different forms of government, upon ſimilar principles.

In ſhort, my deſign was nearly the ſame as the deſign of Monſ. Thomas, but his abilities ſuperior to mine. I therefore thought a tranſlation of his book a more worthy preſent to the public, than an inferior original.

I however am not deterred from purſuing

the ſubject, and (if I may uſe the expreſſion) filling up the outlines which Monſ. Thomas has ſketched. On the contrary, the coincidence of many of my opinions with the opinions of ſo great a man, has induced me to attempt ſome Eſſays on the Female Mind.

He has conſidered the female character in different ages; and I believe it will not be impertinent to conſider the character of women in different countries, of different religions, and under different forms of government, in the preſent age.

In reſpect to Engliſh women in particular, it cannot be improper to conſider their character in different periods, with the cauſes which have given riſe to the changes in their modes of life, and conſequently influenced their manners, their ideas, and their morals.

From theſe obſervations there will naturally ariſe ſome thoughts upon female education. The degree of inſtruction which was ſuitable when women ſpent their lives more in retirement, is inſufficient in the preſent times. When more accompliſhments are required, more ſolid acquirements become neceſſary, even as a balance to theſe accompliſhments.

My

My undertaking has at leaſt the recommendation of novelty. The female character has not yet obtained much attention; for I cannot regard the hiſtorians or biographers, who have given us the lives of illuſtrious or infamous women, as having conſidered it.

Amongſt thoſe who have profeſſed to write upon the ſubject, ſome have inſulted women with unmeaning praiſe, others have condemned them for their ignorance in things which they have been forbid to learn, or have ſhewn their talent for ridicule and humour, by applying the character of the fooliſh, and the vicious, to women in general.

And thoſe who have written advice to the ſex, have moſtly contented themſelves with pointing out the decencies they ought to practiſe, inſtead of inculcating the virtues from whence thoſe decencies naturally ariſe: they have raiſed an edifice without laying a foundation.

Should this tranſlation meet with the approbation of the public, it will be followed by my own Eſſays; otherwiſe, I ſhall conclude, that, either I have not done juſtice to my author, or that the world is not diſpoſed to intereſt itſelf upon the ſubject.

I do

I do not flatter myſelf that my Eſſays will work a reformation in the morals and manners of the age; more able pens than mine might attempt it without ſucceſs. The intention, to ſay no more of it, is at leaſt excuſable.

Should I be ſo fortunate as to aſſiſt one mother in the taſk of inſpiring her daughter with thoſe ſentiments which are the baſis of every virtuous and every noble action;

Should I prevail upon one woman to examine her own heart, to liſten to the dictates of her conſcience, and obey its laws;

Should I teach one woman to believe what great and good things ſhe is capable of, and to raiſe herſelf above the follies with which ſhe is ſurrounded; my labours will be amply repaid, I ſhall not have lived an uſeleſs member of ſociety.

I beg that the reader of this work will regard me merely as a tranſlator; my own Eſſays, ſhould they ever appear, will ſhow how far I agree with, or diſſent from, the opinions of Monſ. Thomas.

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT.

FENELON has written upon the education of women; other writers, more or leſs celebrated, have, after him, treated upon the ſame topic; and perhaps there ought to be ſtill a new work upon this ſubject, one of the moſt uſeful and the moſt neglected. This is not the end which is here propoſed: we here preſent an hiſtorical picture, as a reſult of facts and of experiences, which may ſerve as a baſis to a work of reaſoning. Perhaps we ſhall ſee by it, that women are ſuſceptible of all the qualities which religion, policy, or government would give them.

This little piece, which may be conſidered as making a part of the hiſtory of manners, is detached from a more conſiderable work which has not yet appeared, and in which we have conſidered the good and ill uſe which has been made of praiſe in all ages.

In conſequence of this plan, we have examined the various ſorts of merit which have diſtinguiſhed the moſt celebrated women in the

the different periods of hiſtory; and on that occaſion have ſpoken ſometimes of the elogies which have been made upon them.

Some perſons have appeared deſirous that this little piece ſhould be detached from the reſt, and it is here given ſeparately.

ERRATA.

Page 75, line 16, *for* Selin, *read* Selim.
Page 98, line 24, *for* Lepante *read* Lepanto.
Page 105, line 3, *for* Forzi, *read* Porzi.
Page 108, line 3 and 4, *for* approve of all it, *read* approve of it all.

AN

ESSAY, &c.

IF we take a ſurvey of countries and ages, we ſhall every where ſee the women adored and oppreſſed.

Man, who has never miſſed an opportunity of abuſing his power, has every where availed himſelf of their weakneſs, while he paid homage to their beauty, and has been at once their tyrant and their ſlave.

Nature herſelf, in forming beings with ſo much ſenſibility and ſo much ſoftneſs, ſeems to be much more intereſted in their charms than their happineſs. For ever encompaſſed with afflictions, and with fears, they partake all our evils, and are,

beſides, ſubject to others which are peculiar to their ſex.

In giving life to their infants, they hazard the loſs of their own: every change which they experience, impairs their health: cruel diſorders deſpoil their beauty, or threaten them with death; or at beſt, the flower but certain hand of Time, by daily ſtealing from them a part of themſelves, deſtroys their charms. They can then only expect protection from the humiliating ſentiment of compaſſion, or the feeble bond of gratitude.

Society ſtill adds to the evils which Nature has provided for them.—More than half the globe is covered with ſavages, amongſt all which people the women are extremely miſerable.—Man, in his ſavage ſtate, is at the ſame time fierce and indolent; active only from neceſſity, but carried by an invincible inclination to repoſe, he knows ſcarcely any thing of love but appetite; and, having

having none of thoſe moral ideas, which alone can ſoften the tyranny of that ſtrength which his untutored mind accuſtoms him to regard as the only law of nature, he commands deſpotically thoſe beings who are his equals in reaſon, but his ſubjects from weakneſs. Women, amongſt the Indians, are what the Ilotes were amongſt the Spartans; a conquered people, obliged to labour for their conquerors.

On the banks of the river Oronoque, mothers have been ſeen to murder their girls out of tenderneſs, and ſtrangle them in their birth; which barbarous pity they regard as a duty. Can there be a ſtronger proof of miſery?

If we look amongſt the Orientals, we ſhall find another ſpecies of deſpotiſm and tyranny; amongſt them, confinement, and the domeſtic ſervitude of women, is authoriſed by the manners, and conſecrated by the laws. In Turkey, in Perſia, in Hindoſtan, in Japan, and

in the vaſt empire of China, one half of the human ſpecies is oppreſſed by the other. Theſe exceſſes of oppreſſion, take their riſe from the exceſs of love itſelf: all Aſia is covered with domeſtic priſons, where beauty in ſlavery attends the caprices of a maſter.

There, multitudes of women collected together, have ſenſes and will but for one man. The triumphs of theſe are momentary; but their rivalſhips, their hatred, and their fury, are perpetual. In theſe countries, women are obliged to repay even their ſervitude with the moſt tender love, or, what is more frightful, with the reſemblance of love which they do not feel; and the moſt humiliating deſpotiſm ſubjects them to the authority of monſters, who, being of neither ſex, are a diſhonour to both. All their education tends to their debaſement, their virtues are conſtrained, even their pleaſures are melancholy and involuntary; and, after an exiſtence of a

few

few years, their old-age is long and frightful.

In more temperate countries, where the climate gives leſs ardour to deſires, and places more confidence in virtue, the women are not deprived of their liberty; but the ſeverity of legiſlation has every where placed them in a ſtate of dependence.

In one place they are condemned to retirement, and excluded from pleaſures as from buſineſs; in another, a long tutelage ſeems to inſult their reaſon. Inſulted in one climate by polygamy, which gives them their rivals for their conſtant companions; ſubjected in another to indiſſolvable bands, which often join, for ever, ſweetneſs to ferocity, and ſenſibility to hatred. Conſtrained in their deſires, conſtrained in the diſtribution of their fortunes; the laws deprive them even of their will.

They are, beſides, ſlaves to the public opinion, which exerts its empire over them, and makes a crime even of appearances; encompaſſed on every ſide with judges, who are at the ſame time their ſeducers and their tyrants; and who, after having prepared their faults, puniſh them by diſhonour, or uſurp the right of defaming them upon ſuſpicion. Such is pretty nearly the fate of women throughout the world.

According to climate and age, man, in regard to the ſex, is either indifferent, or an oppreſſor. It is thus they ſometimes experience the cold and calm oppreſſion which is inſpired by pride, ſometimes the violent and terrible oppreſſion inſpired by jealouſy. When they are not beloved, they are nothing; when they are adored, they are tormented: love or indifference are almoſt equally their enemies. Upon three quarters of the globe, Nature has placed them between contempt and unhappineſs.

Even

Even amongſt the very people by whom their power was moſt acknowledged, we find men who have endeavoured to deprive them of every ſpecies of glory.

A celebrated Greek has ſaid †, that the woman the moſt virtuous, is her who is leaſt ſpoken of. Thus this ſevere man, whilſt he impoſed duties, took from them the reward of public eſteem; and whilſt he exacted virtues, made it a crime to aſpire to honour.

If one of the Grecian women had undertaken to defend the cauſe of her ſex, ſhe might have ſaid to him, How great is your injuſtice! if we have a right to virtues like you, why ſhould we not have a right to praiſe? Public eſteem is the property of thoſe who know how to merit it. Our duties, it is true, are different from yours; but when they are fulfilled, they contribute to your felicity and the delights of life. We are wives and mothers; it is we who form

† Thucydides.

the tender ties of kindred. It is we who ſoften that almoſt ſavage rudeneſs which belongs perhaps to ſtrength, and which every moment might make man the enemy of man. We cultivate in you that ſenſibility which ſoftens the manners; and our tears remind you that there are unhappy beings.

In fine, you are not ignorant, that, like you, we have need of courage. More weak, we have alſo more to ſtruggle with. Nature proves us by ſorrow, the laws by conſtraint; and our virtue is proved by trials. Sometimes alſo our country demands ſacrifices of us. When you ſhed your blood in the ſervice of the ſtate, you ought to know that it is ours. In giving to it our huſbands and our ſons, we give it more than ourſelves; for in the field of battle you can but die, but we have the unhappineſs to ſurvive thoſe who are moſt dear to us. Ah! wherefore, whilſt your arrogant vanity is unceaſingly employ-

ed

ed in covering the earth with ſtatues, mauſoleums, and inſcriptions, endeavouring, were it poſſible, to immortalize your names, and to live again when you ſhall be no more, do you condemn us to live unknown, and deſire that oblivion and eternal ſilence ſhould be our lot?

Be not our tyrants in every thing; permit our names to be ſometimes mentioned out of the narrow circle in which we live; permit gratitude or love to engrave it on the tomb where our aſhes are to repoſe; and deprive us not of that eſteem, which, next to the approbation of our own hearts, is the ſweeteſt recompence of merit.

We muſt allow that all men are not equally unjuſt; in ſome countries they have paid public homage to women: the arts have been employed to raiſe monuments to them, eloquence to celebrate their virtues, and a thouſand au-

thors have been pleaſed to collect all their ſhining actions.

I mean not to enter into details, which perhaps would fatigue through their uniformity; but would ſee in general what are the qualities, and the different ſorts of merit of which women are ſuſceptible; how far government, circumſtances, and laws can influence their manners, and the imperceptible effects which policy has over their minds.

I proceed then to examine what women have been in different ages, and in what manner the ſpirit of the times, or the nations in which they have lived, have influenced their character. This ſhall be, if I may ſo call it, the hiſtory of that part of human kind, which the other flatter and calumniate by turns, and ſometimes without knowing them: for it is the fate of the female world, as it is the fate of kings, to be rarely ſpoken of with truth; but to be oftener eſtimated

eſtimated according to humour or intereſt, than by the rules of juſtice.

This work ſhall neither be a panegyric nor a ſatire, but a collection of ſuch obſervations and facts, as will ſhew to us what women have been, what they are, and what they are capable of being.

We find firſt in Plutarch, the panegyriſt and the judge of ſo many celebrated men, a work intitled, *The virtuous Actions of Women*. It is addreſſed to a lady named *Cléa*, of whom we know but little; but her connection, alone, with the philoſopher of Chæronea, has induced ſome writers to place her in the rank of female philoſophers.

Plutarch, at the head of that work, blames thoſe who would deprive women of the juſt praiſes which are their due. "One might," ſays he, "draw a parallel between Anacreon and Sappho, "between Semiramis and Seſoſtris, between Teniquil and Servius, between "Brutus and Portia. The talents and

" virtues are modified by circum-
" ſtances and perſons; but the ſource
" is the ſame; there is, if I may ſo
" expreſs it, only the ſurface and the
" colours which are different."

He ſpeaks afterwards of a great number of women of all nations, who have ſhewed examples of courage, and a generous contempt for death; he quotes the Phocian women, who, before a combat which threatened the deſtruction of their city, conſented to bury themſelves in the flames, if the battle was loſt; and crowned the firſt who propoſed this advice in the council, with flowers: he ſpeaks of others, who, in a beſieged city, made the men bluſh for a diſhonourable capitulation; others, who, at an engagement, ſeeing their huſbands and their ſons fly from the enemy, ran before them, ſhutting up the paſſages, and forced them to return to victory or death; others, who, in a place which was beſieged, flew to the ramparts, defended their city,

and

and repulſed an army; many, who reſiſted and braved tyrants, and who, the moment the tyrant was no more, ran and danced before the conſpirators, and crowned them with their own hands; many, who themſelves gave liberty to their country; ſome, who expoſed themſelves to death, and loaded themſelves with chains, to redeem their captive huſbands; Camma, who poiſoned herſelf at the altar, thereby to poiſon the aſſaſſin of her huſband, and turning towards him, *I have only lived*, ſaid ſhe, *to revenge my huſband—it is done. Thou, mean time, in place of a nuptial bed, order that they prepare for thee a tomb.*

He ſpeaks, alſo, of the women of Gaul, who, in a civil war, threw themſelves between two armies, ſeparated and reconciled the combatants; by which they merited and obtained the honour to be afterwards admitted to the public deliberations, and ſometimes to be taken for arbiters between nations.

After

After theſe generous and noble qualities, by which women ſeem to be raiſed above themſelves, Plutarch has given examples of thoſe gentle virtues, which, while they ſurpriſe us leſs, muſt charm us more, as being the proper and natural merit of the ſex.

He praiſes the women of an iſland in the Archipelago, where, in ſeven hundred years, ſays he, no one could advance an example of weakneſs in a young perſon, nor of adultery in a married one.

In ſpeaking of the young Mileſian women, he mentions a fact which merits the attention of a philoſopher. Crouds of them put themſelves to death; they were undoubtedly at that age when nature ſtirs up unquiet and vague inclinations, which violently diſturb the imagination; when the ſoul, aſtoniſhed at its new deſires, feels melancholy ſucceed to calm, and to the playfulneſs of infancy. Nothing, ſays he, could prevent the

the ſuicides, until they made a law which ſentenced the firſt who killed herſelf to be carried naked, and expoſed in the public places. Theſe young girls dared to die, but no one dared expoſe herſelf to ſhame, even after death ; and the ſuicides ceaſed *.

Beſides this work of Plutarch, we have another in honour of the Spartan women, quoting a number of their expreſſions which ſhew their courage and ſtrength. It is there we find ſouls altogether different from thoſe we are acquainted with ; natural affection ſacrificed

* Plutarch, in the ſame book, quotes another action of a woman, which, even at this day, might ſerve for an excellent leſſon of political œconomy. A certain King, who believed that gold was riches, exhauſted the inhabitants of his country by making them work the mines. Every thing went to ruin. The inhabitants, in this diſtreſs, had recourſe to the Queen ; who gave ſecret orders to the workers in gold to prepare golden loaves, golden meats, and fruit in gold ; and when

ficed to the love of their country; honour prevailing over tenderneſs; the name of citizen preferred to the name of mother; tears of joy ſhed over the lifeleſs corpſe of a ſon covered with wounds, and maternal hands armed againſt a ſon capable of cowardice; orders of death ſent to a ſon ſuſpected of a crime; ſorrow and complaints regarded either as a weakneſs, or as an outrage, and intrepidity even in ſervitude.

He gives an example of one amongſt them, who, being priſoner, and ſold as a

when the Prince returned from a journey, ordered them to be ſerved up before him. This ſight rejoiced him at firſt, but ſoon after he found himſelf hungry, and aſked for victuals. We have nothing but gold, replied the Queen; your lands are dried up, they bring forth nothing; we have ſerved you up what you love, and the only thing which is left us. The King underſtood her, and corrected himſelf. This fact, which is little known, deſerves to be embelliſhed by the ingenious and poignant writer, who made of fables moral inſtruction for young Princes.

ſlave,

ſlave, was interrogated, *What do you know? To be free*, replied ſhe: and, when her maſter had commanded a thing injurious to her honour, *You are not worthy of me*, ſaid ſhe, and abandoned herſelf to death.

Thoſe who judge of what has been by what is; thoſe, above all, who are ignorant of the influence which a legiſlation conceived and framed by one head, and combined in all its parts; has over the minds of a people, can never have an idea of ſo much courage in the ſex, which appears much more deſtined to be tender than brave. But ſuch is the power of inſtitutions and examples.

Amongſt the Greeks, who were almoſt all republicans, the manners of the women were properly auſtere. The retirement in which they paſſed their lives, fortified their ſouls; the public poverty retrenched the means of corruption; and the general ſenſe of honour elevated their minds. It was their

pride,

pride, not to be inferior to their ſons, their brothers, or their huſbands. And, not being able to draw the men to them, they raiſed themſelves to their level.

Beſides, in thoſe early ages, the epoch of the formation of ſtates, and of the civilization of men, each ſex was equally expoſed to the common danger: republics, or kingdoms conſiſting of one city, were unceaſingly menaced or invaded; and, as the national hatreds were more irritated, by the mutual interfering of intereſts, they were the more violent, and leſs willing to forgive.

Wars, which amongſt us are the wars of Kings, were then the wars of the people, and they fought to deſtroy. A defeat was particularly dreadful to women, becauſe the ſervitude eſtabliſhed by conqueſt was only an aſylum againſt death, but never againſt ſhame.

In the interior government of ſtates, the uncertainty of laws, and the ſhocks given to liberty, opened the door to tyrants.

tyrants. The right of commanding was then the right of abuſing; the citizen knew not what he had to hope or to fear. From hence proceeded reſiſtances and conſpiracies; from hence the ſecret plots, and the women admitted to aſſiſt in vengeances, becauſe the evils extended to themſelves, and oftentimes they were in danger of loſing more than their lives. It was then that the two ſexes ſhewed the ſame inclinations; and the courage was extreme, becauſe the danger was ſo.

In the ſame times, and from the ſame motives, there were in Europe, as in Aſia, invaſions, voyages, and emigrations of armed people; and thoſe companies of wanderers partook at once the danger and the preſumption; there muſt, therefore, in all theſe times, have been a habitude of courage in the women; and the habit of ſtruggling with perils, produced in them the habit of combating with themſelves, and inſpir-

ed

ed that loftineſs which is ſo much connected with the honour of the ſex.

It is almoſt always idleneſs, and the inquiet leiſure of thoſe ſocieties in which the imagination continually produces deſires, and the ſoul corrupts itſelf thro' the medium of all the ſenſes at once, which prepares the way to ſeduction. But the lives of theſe women being always either tempeſtuous or retired, muſt have made them join to their courage a lofty and delicate ſenſe of honour.

And courage and honour are in fact the two qualities which Plutarch ſo much praiſes in the Greek and Barbarian women.

Mean while, as even in thoſe times there were different modes of government, we muſt not imagine that the manners of women were every where the ſame.

It ſeems that in general, in the iſlands of Greece, the manners were more pure than

than upon the continent. The iſlanders, being more ſeparated from their neighbours, could with greater eaſe preſerve their laws and their virtue; the martial convent of Lacedemonia muſt neceſſarily have been more auſtere than the laughing abode of Athens; and Thebes, where there was but a groſs ſimplicity, in the room of luxury, could not have reſembled Corinth, which, by its ſituation and its commerce, drew from two ſeas riches and vices.

In ſhort, in proportion as the inſtitutions are corrupt, the general ſpirit of honour in women muſt conſequently decline.—But it is pretty remarkable, that in Greece, whilſt at the higheſt pitch of elegance and politeneſs, the courteſans were treated with diſtinction, more particularly in Athens.

Let us enquire by what means it was, that, in a country where the women had virtue, this order of females, who are at the ſame time a diſgrace to their own

ſex

ſex and to ours, could arrive at conſideration, and ſometimes even to be highly celebrated. One may, I think, give many reaſons for it.

In the firſt place, the courteſans were, in a certain degree, connected with religion. The Goddeſs of Beauty, who had altars erected to her, ſeemed to protect their ſtate, which was for her a ſpecies of worſhip. The courteſans invoked Venus, when the ſtate was in danger, and after the battles; and the Greeks believed, or pretended to believe, that Miltiades and Themiſtocles were great men, becauſe Lais and Glyceres had ſung hymns to their Goddeſs.

The courteſans were alſo connected with religion by means of the arts; they were themſelves the models from which the artiſts formed thoſe ſtatues of Venus which were afterwards adored in the temples †.

They

† Phrine ſerved as a model to Praxiteles, for his

They belonged, as we ſee, to the ſtatuaries, and to the painters, whoſe works they embelliſhed.

They were moſt of them muſicians; and that art, more powerful in Greece than elſewhere, was an addition to their charms.

We know what enthuſiaſts theſe people were to beauty. The delicate imagination of the Greeks adored beauty in the temples, admired it in the maſterpieces of art, contemplated it in their exerciſes and games, endeavoured to perfect it in their marriages, and offered it the prize at their public feaſts.

But, amongſt the women of honour, the ſolitary beauty was often obſcured

his Venus of Gnidus: and, during the feaſts of Neptune, which were held near Eleuſis, Apelles having ſeen this ſame courteſan upon the ſeaſhore, with no other covering but her diſhevelled and flowing hair, was ſo much dazzled by her beauty, that he took from thence the idea of his Venus riſing from the flood.

and retired: the beauty of the courteſans offering itſelf every where, every where attracted homage.

It is ſociety alone which can diſcover the charms of the underſtanding; and the women of virtue were excluded from ſociety. The courteſans, on the contrary, lived publicly in Athens; and by hearing conſtant converſations upon the ſubjects of philoſophy, politics, and poetry, they by degrees acquired a taſte, which poliſhed their wit, and embelliſhed their converſation.

Their houſes became the ſchools of eloquence; the poets drew from thence the lively taſte for ridicule and grace; and philoſophers, ideas which often might have eſcaped themſelves.

Socrates and Pericles found each other at Aſpaſia's, as St. Evremomd and Condé, long after, found each other at Ninon's. At the houſes of the courteſans they acquired delicacy and taſte; and in return gave them reputation.

Greece

Greece was governed by the men of eloquence; and the celebrated courtesans, by their power over the orators, muſt have had influence in affairs. Their power extended itſelf over every one, even over Demoſthenes, ſo terrible to tyrants; of whom it is ſaid, *That which he had meditated a year, a woman overthrew in one day.* This influence augmented their conſequence, and manifeſted their wit, and their power of pleaſing.

It is true that the laws, and the public inſtitutions, by authorizing the retirement of women, ſtamped a great value upon the ſanctity of marriages; but in Athens, the imagination, the luxury, the taſte for arts and pleaſures, were in contradiction to the laws. The courteſans were then, if one may ſay ſo, a ſupport to the morals; the vice diſpenſed out of families did not revolt; but the interior vice, and that which troubled the peace of houſes, was a crime.

By a ſtrange, and perhaps ſingular abſurdity, the men were corrupt, and the domeſtic manners auſtere.

It ſeems as if the courteſans were not regarded as of their ſex; and by a convention, with which the laws and the manners complied, whilſt they only eſteemed other women for their virtues, they eſteemed the courteſans for their accompliſhments.

All theſe reaſons help us to account for the honours which they received ſo often in Greece; without them, it would be difficult to conceive how ſix or ſeven writers could have all conſecrated their pens to celebrate the Athenian courteſans *; how three famous painters could entirely devote their pencils to repreſenting them upon the canvaſs; how ſo many Greek poets could celebrate them in their comedies and their verſes. Without theſe reaſons, one could hardly

* See Athenea.

believe

believe that the greateſt men made intereſt to enjoy the pleaſure of their acquaintance; or that Aſpaſia could dictate whether it ſhould be war or peace; that Phriné had her ſtatue in gold placed between the ſtatues of two Kings, at Delphos; and that, after their death, the courteſans had ſometimes magnificent monuments erected to their memory.

"*The traveller who approaches Athens*," ſays a Greek writer *, "*ſeeing by the way-ſide a mauſoleum, which attracts from afar his attention, imagines within himſelf that it is the tomb of Miltiades, or of Pericles, or ſome other of the great men who have ſerved their country; he approaches to inform himſelf, and learns that it is a harlot who is buried with ſo much pomp.*"

And Theopompus, in a letter to Alexander, after having mentioned to

* Dicæarchus.

him this mauſoleum, "*thus*," ſays he, "*even after her death, a courteſan is* "*honoured; and amongſt all thoſe who* "*have loſt their lives in Aſia, fighting for* "*you, and the ſafety of Greece, there is not* "*one who has a tomb, or of whom there has* "*even been a thought of honouring their* "*aſhes.*"

Such were the homages which this voluptuous, enthuſiaſtic, and ſuſceptible nation paid to beauty. Athens, conducting herſelf by imagination more than by morals, and having laws rather than principles, ſhe exiled her great men, honoured her courteſans, put Socrates to death, ſuffered herſelf to be governed by Aſpaſia, guarded the ſanctity of the married ſtate, and placed Phriné in the temples.

Amongſt the Romans, a rigid and grave people, who remained, during five hundred years, ignorant of pleaſures and of arts, and who, between their ploughs and their camps, were conſtantly

conſtantly employed in labour, or in war, the manners of the women were a long time like the manners of the men, grave and auſtere, and without the leaſt mixture of corruption or weakneſs.

The period when the Roman women appeared in public, forms an epoch in the hiſtory of their country. Until that time, they were ſhut up in their houſes, where their rude and ſimple virtue was directed entirely by nature, and uninfluenced by what we call amuſements; ſo unpoliſhed as only to know how to be wives and mothers; chaſte, without ſuppoſing it poſſible for them to be otherwiſe; tender, without having learned to define the word; occupied in their duties, and ignorant that there were other pleaſures, they paſſed their lives in retirement, to nouriſh their children, to raiſe for the republic a race of labourers and ſoldiers; and even employed part of the night in working for their

huſbands, with the diſtaff or the needle. Every Roman was dreſſed in a habit ſpun by his wife, or his daughters; and even Auguſtus, when maſter of the world, ſtill ſhewed that example of ancient œconomy. In theſe days of ſimplicity, the Roman women were reſpected, as in all countries where there are morals.

The conquering huſband, after his return from a battle, met his wife with tranſports, and preſented her with the ſpoils of the enemy; he obtained honour in the ſight of his wife, from the wounds which he had received in the defence of the ſtate and his family. Oft-times the Romans came from commanding kings; but in their own houſes they made it their glory to obey.

It was in vain that the ſevere laws gave the huſbands the right of life and death; the women, more powerful than the laws, commanded their judges. In vain the laws, to prevent inconveniences,

ces, permitted divorces; the divorces, authoriſed by the laws, were prevented by the manners, becauſe the inconveniences, which render divorces neceſſary, do not exiſt but amongſt a corrupt people.

Such was the reign of beauty, before the cuſtom of the two ſexes mixing together, corrupted both, and mutually diſgraced each other.

It appears that every thing was done in Rome to prolong the women in this happy ſtate *.

Mean while, we do not ſee that the Roman women had that fierce courage, which Plutarch praiſes ſo much in certain Greek and Barbarian women: they were nearer nature, or exaggerated leſs; their firſt quality was decency.

* When Septimus Severus aſcended the throne, he found three thouſand accuſations of adultery inſcribed upon the rolls: he was obliged to renounce his project of reformation.

Every one remembers that act of Cato the Cenſor, by which he eraſed the name of a Roman from the liſt of ſenators, for having given a kiſs to his wife before his daughter.

To theſe auſtere manners the Roman women joined a love for their country, which appeared upon ſingular occaſions. At the death of Brutus, they clothed themſelves in mourning; in the time of Coriolanus they ſaved Rome.

That great, provoked man, having braved the ſenate, and the prieſts, and inſenſible even to the pride and pleaſure of pardoning, could not reſiſt the powerful entreaties of the women. The ſenate thanked them by a public decree, and ordained that the men ſhould every where give them precedency: they erected an altar upon the ſpot, where the mother had prevailed with her ſon, and the wife with her huſband; and permitted all the women to add an ornament extraordinary to their head-dreſs. We

muſt

muſt allow that the faſhions in France have not altogether ſo noble an origin.

In the time of Brennus, they ſaved Rome a ſecond time, and gave all their gold for the ranſom of the city; upon that occaſion the ſenate permitted them to have the honour of being praiſed from the roſtrum, the ſame as the magiſtrates and the warriors.

After the battle of Cannæ, when Rome had no other treaſures than the virtues of her citizens, they ſacrificed even their jewels and their trinkets; and a new decree recompenſed their zeal.

Valerius Maximus, who lived under Tiberius, has left us a work, a monument of great virtues, rather than of taſte, in which he has in many parts praiſed the Roman ladies; but theſe are not ſo properly elogies as detached facts; in relating which, he ſometimes gives way to the impulſes of an orator.

One may eaſily believe, that in this work he has not forgot the famous Portia, daughter of Cato, and wife of Brutus; nor Julia, wife of Pompey, who fainted upon ſeeing a robe belonging to her huſband ſtained with blood; nor that young Roman matron, who in priſon nouriſhed her mother with her milk; nor the many illuſtrious women who, in the time of the proſcriptions, endangered their lives to ſave their huſbands. This author, in celebrating their virtues, mentions their talents.

He informs us, that in the ſecond triumvirate, the three aſſaſſins, then maſters of Rome, thirſting for gold, after having ſhed ſo much blood, and apparently exhauſted every ſpecies of extortion, and every mode of pillaging, bethought themſelves of taxing the women, from each of whom they demanded a conſiderable contribution; the women ſought an orator to defend their cauſe, but could find none; no one dared to

plead againſt thoſe who proſcribed. It was then that the daughter of the famous Hortenſius preſented herſelf ſingly; in her the talents of her father were revived; ſhe defended the cauſe of her ſex and herſelf with ſuch intrepidity, that the tyrants bluſhed, and revoked their orders.

Hortenſia was conducted to her houſe in triumph; and a woman had, in one day, the glory of giving an example of courage to men, a model of eloquence to women, and a leſſon of humanity to tyrants.

Let us obſerve, that the firſt appearance of talents in the Roman women, was at the time when the ſociety muſt have been much improved by opulence, by luxury, by the uſe and abuſe of arts and of riches; under which circumſtances the retirement of the women muſt neceſſarily have been leſs rigid; their wit was grown more active by being more exerciſed; their ſouls found

new wants; the idea of reputation ſprung up amongſt them; their leiſure increaſed by the diſtinction of duties; and their former occupations were regarded as vulgar duties, which the opulent women left to the people: they had now acquired ideas of more elegant employments, and new modes of diſſipation.

During ſix hundred years, virtues alone could pleaſe, but now it became neceſſary to have accompliſhments; they would have admiration joined to eſteem; and even paſſed by eſteem for the ſake of eclat: for in every country, in proportion as the love for virtue diminiſhes, the value of talents increaſes.

This laſt revolution was made under the Emperors; and a thouſand cauſes contributed to it. The great inequality of ranks, the exceſſive fortunes, the ridicule which, at court, was attached to moral ideas; and the vigorous minds

of

of the Romans, impetuous in evil as in good; all contributed to precipitate the corruption.

Then vice had no reſtraint: the rage for public ſpectacles brought the greateſt and moſt vile licentiouſneſs into faſhion; the women diſputed with each other upon the merits of a buffoon; they fixed their hearts and their eyes with avidity upon a theatre, to enjoy and admire the movements of a pantomime; and a performer upon the flute ſwallowed up the patrimonies, and gave heirs to the deſcendents of the Scipios and the Emilii.

The debauched dreaded fecundity: they learnt to counteract nature, and brought to perfection the horrible art of procuring abortions. The paſſions were every day renewed, to be every day ſatisfied: the women, abandoning themſelves to every thing, and diſguſted with every thing, multiplied in Rome the monſters of Aſia, and had their

ſlaves

ſlaves mutilated, to ſatisfy the new caprices of an imagination fatigued with pleaſures.

The vices were grown more powerful than the laws; which were now no longer employed to preſerve the morals, but to puniſh crimes; and ſometimes, as their nature and their number frightened the tribunal, it became, in a manner, neceſſary for the law to cover itſelf with a veil, becauſe it would have been equally dangerous and ſcandalous to have diſcovered all the guilty.

There is no doubt but that in this age women were much oftener praiſed for their rank than their virtue, and oftener for talents and graces than for morals.

In the early days of the empire, there were many orations in praiſe of women pronounced from the roſtrum: the elogy of Junia, ſiſter of Brutus, and wife to Caſſius; the elogy of the Empreſs Livia,

Livia, mother of Tiberius; that of Octavia by Auguſtus; and that of Pompeia by Nero.

We may ſay that the firſt of theſe was in praiſe of rigid and republican virtue. The ſecond ought to mark the character of women, in its medium betwixt republican manners and the manners of a court, and under a Prince. Livia belonged to the firſt, by ſome remains of ſimplicity, and, to uſe the words of Tacitus, by the ſanctity of her houſe: ſhe belonged to the ſecond, by a riſing ambition, by the deſire of renown, by a rational artifice, and by the art of employing ſkilfully the perſuaſive charms of her ſex; in ſhort, by intrigue and management, applied by turns to great and little things.

The third, that of Octavia, was the elogy of beauty become intereſting by misfortunes, and connected with great events, of which ſhe was rather the victim than the cauſe; but the elogy of

of Pompeia, pronounced by an emperor, and applauded by the Romans, ſhews the laſt ſtage of corruption.

It ſeems that all the women who belonged to the imperial houſe, or who entered into it, were honoured in the ſame manner after their death. Many amongſt them, whilſt upon the throne, were ſcandalous in their pleaſures; but the deifying them repaired all: religion was leſs ſevere than morals, and it was eaſier to make a goddeſs than a virtuous woman.

There were, nevertheleſs, in theſe times, ſome virtues amongſt the women. But theſe virtues remarked themſelves. Moſt of them owed their birth to Stoiciſm, which, under the firſt emperors, expended itſelf in Rome.

We know that Stoiciſm is for the manners, what the republican auſterity is for the government. It raiſed up again, in ſome families, the ancient manners; but with this difference, that formerly,

merly, in Rome, the virtue contracted almoſt in birth was like the habits of infancy, and the happy work of example as well as laws.

But in the empire, virtue was only to be acquired by reaſon and fortitude; the principles of morality, aided by cool reaſon, were not alone ſufficient. In order to arrive at whatever man is capable of, there muſt be a certain enthuſiaſm, which gives energy to the ſoul, and ſupports it: an enthuſiaſm, which propoſes to itſelf a grandeur above the grandeur of man; which makes a man contemn pleaſures, the better to guard againſt vice; which makes him brave troubles, the better to ſubdue himſelf; which, in ſhort, in places where crimes are all-powerful, both by authority and example, renders man independent of every thing but his duty, and, raiſing him above the vile univerſe which ſurrounds him, makes him his own cenſor,

his

his own maſter, and the judge and admirer of himſelf.

In that period, Stoiciſm was then neceſſary at Rome, as a powerful counterpoiſe to a terrible weight; and, in effect, it produced the ſtrongeſt contraſts; the exceſs of courage by the ſide of the exceſs of baſeneſs, and the moſt rigid auſterity by the ſide of the moſt diſhonourable licentiouſneſs.

It is to be remarked, that Stoiciſm never produced ſuch noble effects in Greece as in Rome; perhaps, becauſe there was ſomething to reſiſt it, it made extraordinary efforts.

To produce grand virtues, there muſt be great occaſions and great evils. Stoiciſm reſembles that ſtrength which augments itſelf in proportion to the reſiſtance it meets with.

Many celebrated Romans nouriſhed in this ſect, diſplayed the virtues which it inſpired; and the women, more ſuſceptible

ceptible of habits than of principles, and almoſt always governed by the manners the moſt ſtriking, imitated their huſbands and their fathers.

Portia gave the firſt example: daughter of Cato, and wife of Brutus, ſhe was, if we may uſe the expreſſion, raiſed to the grandeur of their ſouls. In the conſpiracy againſt Cæſar, ſhe proved herſelf worthy to be aſſociated in the ſecrets of the ſtate. After the battle of Philippi, ſhe would not ſurvive the liberty of her country, and the death of Brutus, but died with the fierce intrepidity of a Cato.

The example of Portia was followed by Arria; who, ſeeing her huſband, when he was to die, ſtaggered, and heſitating, to encourage him, pierced her own breaſt, and returned him the poniard; alſo by her daughter, married to Thraſeas, and by the daughter of Thraſeas, married to Helvidius Priſcus, both worthy to be the wives of great men; by Paulina,

wife

wife of Seneca, who opened her veins with him, and was forced to live; during the few years that ſhe ſurvived, ſhe carried, ſays Tacitus, an honourable paleneſs, which atteſted that part of her blood had flowed with the blood of her ſpouſe.

The ſame greatneſs of mind was ſhewn, though in another manner, by Agrippina, wife of Germanicus: this lofty and tender lady, while ſhe was ſtill young, buried herſelf in retirement; and without ſuffering her haughtineſs to bend under Tiberius, or her heart to corrupt itſelf by the manners of the age, continued equally implacable againſt her tyrant, and faithful to her huſband; ſhe paſſed her life in bewailing the one, and deteſting the other.

And by the celebrated Epimona, whom Veſpaſian ought to have admired, and whom he ſo ſhamefully put to death.

Amongſt all theſe women, expoſed to the hatred of tyrants, very few of them obtained

obtained the honour of a public oration; but they obtained what is of greater value, they were praiſed by Tacitus, and two lines of Tacitus are worth more than all the cuſtomary panegyrics together.

It is not my intention to ſpeak of all the celebrated women of the Empire; but Oppius, Herodius, Philoſtratus, and Dion, having all of them quoted one of a different character and ſpecies of merit, it will be permitted me to mention her. This was the Empreſs Julia, wife of Septimus Severus, born in Syria, and daughter of a prieſt of the Sun; it was predicted of her, that ſhe ſhould be raiſed to the rank of a ſovereign, and her character juſtified the prediction. Upon the throne ſhe paſſionately loved, or appeared to love, letters; either from taſte, from a deſire to inſtruct herſelf, from a love of renown, or poſſibly from all theſe together, ſhe paſſed her life with the philoſophers.

Her

Her imperial rank, perhaps, was not alone ſufficient to conquer noble hearts; but ſhe joined to it, beſides, the charms of wit and of beauty. Theſe various attractions rendered unneceſſary that management which conſiſts but in cunning; and which, by obſerving diſpoſitions and foibles, governs great ſouls by little means. She obtained the title of philoſopher; but her philoſophy, however, was not equal to endowing her with morals. Her huſband, who did not love her, eſteemed her genius, and conſulted her upon all affairs, and ſhe governed even in the reigns of her ſons.

Julia was, in ſhort, an empreſs and a politician, occupied at once by the ſciences and affairs of ſtate, and pretty publicly mixing pleaſures; having the courtiers for her lovers, the men of learning for her friends, and philoſophers for her courtiers. In the midſt of a ſociety where ſhe reigned, and where ſhe inſtructed herſelf, ſhe arrived

at

at playing a great part; but as ſhe did not join the proper merit of her ſex to theſe accompliſhments, we admire her, but we blame her. She obtained from her contemporaries more praiſe than reſpect, and from poſterity more renown than eſteem.

After her we find Julia-Mammie, who was of the ſame family, and was alſo an empreſs, or at leaſt mother of an emperor. It was her merit to have equal genius and courage; and above all, ſhe educated her ſon, the young Alexander Severus, for the throne, nearly in the ſame manner as Fenelon afterwards educated the Duke of Burgundy; ſhe made him at the ſame time virtuous and ſenſible.

At laſt, in following the courſe of hiſtory, the famous Zenobia preſents herſelf. She was worthy to have been a pupil of Longinus; a princeſs who knew how to write, as ſhe knew how to conquer; who was at laſt unfortunate with dignity;

dignity; who conſoled herſelf for the loſs of a throne by the mildneſs of a retreat, and for the loſs of the pleaſures of grandeur by the pleaſures of the underſtanding.

All theſe ladies received great praïſes from the writers of their age, and have ſerved ſince to ſwell the catalogues of all the panegyriſts of celebrated women *.

The

* At preſent there only remains to us two elogies upon Empreſſes; one is the panegyric upon Euſebia, wife of Conſtance. This lady was the protectrix of Julian; ſhe raiſed him to the rank of Cæſar; and, by the ſecret charm which wit and beauty has, even over tyrants, ſhe ſeveral times ſaved him from the political furies of a prince, always ready to murder thoſe whom he feared. Julian, who owed to her the empire and his life, compoſed her panegyric; but we muſt allow that his gratitude did not make him eloquent.

The other is by Lucian, it is in dialogue, and a ſort of portrait; it is not preciſely known to whom it is addreſſed. But the commentators, who are almoſt always confidents in theſe ſort of ſecrets, do not fail to aſſure us, that it is a panegyric upon

We have obſerved, that at the time when Rome changed its form of government, there aroſe a change in the manners; but near about the third century,

upon an Empreſs. But whoever it was intended for we may venture to ſay that it is the original of forty or fifty thouſand portraits of heroines or princeſſes, which, during four hundred years, have been drawn in France, in Italy, or in Spain, by all the orators, hiſtorians, poets, or romancers; with whom it is the cuſtom and rule, that the ſame woman has every perfection of which any woman is capable. I add, that it is the firſt inſtance which we find amongſt the ancients, of that ſpecies of gallantry ſo much in faſhion amongſt us, and which conſiſts in ſaying to women, with a light wit, and a heart of ice, every thing which we do not believe, and every thing which we would have them believe. This ſtile, which people adopt from the want of ſenſibility, and the deſire of being thought to have it, and which joins exaggeration to falſity, Lucian acquired from the corruption of the manners in the empire, from the natural lightneſs of the Greeks in his time, and from his own character. Wit may decry, but it is only the heart which knows how to praiſe.

there was a new, and ſtill more important revolution.

Until then the manners of women were only founded upon the morals, and were not connected with religious ideas. In ſome countries they had connected the manners with politics; but, according to the different plans of legiſlation, the laws had drawn different lines, where the virtues of women were to begin, and where they were to end, of which the dances of the Lacedæmonian girls are a ſtriking inſtance; and, according to the expreſſion of Monteſquieu, Lycurgus had taken away modeſty even from chaſtity itſelf.

At Rome the women were ſeen to dance publicly upon a ſtage; decency put no veil between them and the eyes of the people; and if Cato came to a ſpectacle to go out again, it was not ſo with the magiſtrates and the pontiffs who attended there. The arts, which every where imitated nature, without hiding

it,

it, assisted in seducing the imagination by the eyes.

Philosophy has no fixed principle respecting women; sometimes it combats against them, and would take from them that gentle modesty, which forms the defence, as well as the charm of the sex *. Sometimes it would have that tender union, which is supposed to be formed from an union of hearts, be only an instantaneous attachment, to be destroyed in the instant after †.

Religion itself was then only a species of sacre policy, which exhibited rather ceremonies than precepts. They honoured the Gods, as amongst us we honour powerful men; that is to say, they offered them incense, and in return ex-

* School of the Cynics, which regarded modesty as a convention, and made it a duty to free one's self from it.

† System of the community of women in a state.

pected protection. They were protectors, and not lawgivers.

But when Chriſtianity aroſe upon the earth, religion then gave precepts. It enjoined the moſt rigid laws in reſpect to women and to manners. It ſtrengthened the bonds of marriage, and of a politic inſtitution, made it a ſacred one, placing the marriage contracts between the tribunal and the altar, under the protection of the Divinity.

The Chriſtian religion did not merely confine itſelf to preventing actions, but extended its influence even over the thoughts; above all, placing a barrier againſt the ſenſes. It proſcribed even inanimate objects, which could aſſiſt towards ſeduction or deſire. In fine, it prevented crimes even in ſolitude, ordaining each one to be his own accuſer; and obliged all the guilty to bluſh, by the forced acknowledgment of their weakneſs.

The

The legiſlation of the Greeks and Romans had made every thing ſubſervient to the political intereſt of ſociety. The new and ſacred laws, on the contrary, inſpired a contempt for this univerſe, and directed the mind to contemplate the idea of a world altogether different from this. There then aroſe the idea of a perfection, which cannot be attained by human nature.

It was then that a whole people reduced to a precept, the abſence of paſſion, the reign of the ſoul, and I know not what elſe of the ſupernatural and ſublime, which mixed itſelf throughout, and the vow of continence, and ſacred celibacy. In thoſe days life was a combat; the ſanctity of manners threw a veil over ſociety, and over nature; beauty was afraid to pleaſe; ſtrength feared to exert itſelf; the powers were employed to ſubdue the paſſions; and the auſterity of the mind daily increaſed by the ſacrifice of the ſenſes.

It is eaſy to conceive the prodigious revolution which this event muſt have produced in manners. Women, who are generally of lively imaginations, and warm hearts, delivered themſelves up to virtues, which were the more flattering in proportion as they were more difficult and painful.

It is almoſt equal, in reſpect merely to preſent pleaſure, whether we ſatisfy violent paſſions, or overcome them; and, provided that the mind exerts itſelf, it is happy in its efforts, even though exerted againſt itſelf.

Another law ordained that Chriſtians ſhould love and aſſiſt each other like brothers. It was then that the ſex, the moſt virtuous, as the moſt tender, turned that ſenſibility which nature had given them, and which religion made them fear to abuſe, into pity; they conſecrated their hands to the ſervice of indigence; delicacy ſurmounted diſguſt, and the tears of beauty were ſhed in the

aſylums

aſylums of miſery, to conſole the unhappy.

In the ſame times, the perſecutions gave birth to perils. To preſerve their faith, they were ſometimes obliged to ſupport chains, exile, and death; courage then became neceſſary.

There is a cool courage, which, as it ſprings from reaſon, is intrepid and calm; this is the courage of philoſophy and great affairs. There is a courage which ſprings from the imagination; it is ardent and precipitate.

The courage of the Chriſtian women was founded upon the moſt noble motives. They were ſeen, raiſed above themſelves, running to the fires and funeral piles, offering their tender and delicate bodies to the torment of the flames.

This revolution in the ideas, naturally produced a change in the mode of writing; therefore all books, in which women were the object, became auſtere and pure like themſelves; almoſt all

the doctors of thoſe times, raiſed by the church at once to the rank of orators and ſaints, emulated each other in praiſing the Chriſtian women.

But, above all others, the one who ſpoke with the greateſt zeal, was St. Jerome; who, born with a heart of fire, ſpent fourſcore years in writing, in ſubduing and overcoming himſelf. His manners were probably more auſtere than his thoughts; he had in Rome a great number of illuſtrious women for his diſciples, and, encompaſſed with beauty, eſcaped weakneſs, without being able to eſcape calumny; at laſt, flying from the world, from women, and from himſelf, he retired into Paleſtine, where all that he had fled from ſtill purſued him; tormented in hair-cloth, and in the quiet of a deſert, he retained in his ears the ſound of the tumult of Rome.

Such, in the fourth century, was the moſt eloquent panegyriſt of the Chriſtian women. This warm and holy writer,

er, notwithſtanding the gloomineſs and impetuoſity of his genius, ſoftened his ſtile, in a thouſand inſtances, to praiſe Marcella, Paulina, Euſtochium, and a great number of other Roman women, who in the capital had embraced the Chriſtian auſterity, and learnt in Rome the Hebrew tongue, that they might read and underſtand the books of Moſes.

In the decline of the empire, and when that croud of barbarians, with which it was over-run, divided, and united themſelves to ſhare its ſpoils, Chriſtianity, to ſoften the ſavage manners, paſſed from the conquered to the conquerors, and was almoſt always introduced by the women.

It has been remarked, that the women, in all ages, have had more of that ardent zeal for religion which delights in making converts, than the men.

Whether it is, that from their very weakneſs, they take faſter hold of the

ſacred opinions, which above all things, are the greateſt ſupport for the ſoul; whether it is, that their lively imaginations are more ſtrongly inflamed by objects which are out of nature, and ſometimes out of the ordinary bounds of human reaſon; whether it is, that the religious opinions amongſt men, are the reſult of reflection, and amongſt women the reſult of ſenſibility; and ſenſibility, we know, has much more activity than reflection: whether it is, that they regard religion, which is equal to all things, as a defence for them, and as a counterpoiſe to aſſiſt weakneſs againſt ſtrength: or whether, after all, is it not that their natural deſire of conqueſt extends itſelf to all things, and that, to aſſure themſelves of their power, they are jealous of exerciſing their aſcendency even over that which is the moſt free, over opinions, and over hearts?

But whatever may be the cauſe, it was women, who, aiding religion by the charms

charms of their ſex, placed it upon thrones, and, by converting their huſbands to Chriſtianity, eſtabliſhed the Chriſtian religion over a great part of Europe.

It was thus that France, England, Germany, Bavaria, Hungary, Bohemia, Lithuania, Poland, Pruſſia, and during ſome time Perſia, received the Goſpel. Thus it was that Lombardy and Spain renounced the opinions of Arius.

We perceive that in theſe ages the religious zeal of women influenced a great part of the world.

I ſhall not here repeat the names of theſe princeſſes, inſerted in the annals of the barbarians, and repeated ſince by ſo many panegyriſts. It is ſufficient for my purpoſe to remark what was the ſpecies of merit which diſtinguiſhed them, and for which they were celebrated in their age, and by poſterity.

Here let us reflect for a moment upon that epoch, the invaſion of the barba-

rians, and obſerve the changes which it produced in manners. Perhaps there was never a more ſingular revolution.

Theſe very ſavages, who brought with them deſolation and ruin, introduced at the ſame time the ſpirit of gallantry which to this day reigns in Europe: and the ſyſtem of regarding women as ſovereigns, which we have reduced into a principle of honour; this ſyſtem, which has had ſo much influence, has been brought to us from the borders of the Baltic ſea, and the foreſts of the North *.

We may learn from hiſtory, that in general all the northern people had the greateſt reſpect for women; the men, hardened by hunting and war, their only occupations, diſdained to ſoften their ferocity by any thing but love. Their

* This is the ſyſtem which has in part formed our manners, our morals, our ſocieties, and which amongſt us has the greateſt influence over writings and over languages.

foreſts

foreſts were the ſchools of chivalry : the women were the prize of valour. A warrior, to render himſelf worthy of his miſtreſs, went forth in queſt of glory and combats. Rivalſhips produced challenges : the ſingle combats, produced by love, often ſtained the foreſts and the borders of the lakes with blood ; and marriages, as well as quarrels, were decided by the ſword.

We ought not to be aſtoniſhed at theſe cuſtoms. Amongſt a people who were but little civilized, although aſſembled in great numbers, women had naturally, and muſt have had, great power. They reigned even by the ſtrength of thoſe whom they commanded.

Society was already ſufficiently eſtabliſhed to give them ideas of preference in love; but not ſufficiently for the ſenſes to be weakened, and the imagination worn out by uſage.

Strong

Strong and ſavage minds, being ignorant of all thoſe pleaſing ties invented by poliſhed ſociety, have a more lively ſenſe of the pleaſures dictated by nature. They even mixed with theſe ſentiments ſomething of religion. Many of theſe people, wandering in their foreſts, imagined that women were endued with the ſpirit of prophecy, and an inexpreſſible ſomething of ſacred and divine.

Might not this be the effect of the general abilities of women, and the advantage which their natural ingenuity gave them over fierce and ſimple warriors; perhaps alſo theſe barbarians, aſtoniſhed at the authority which beauty held over ſtrength, were tempted to attribute to ſomething ſupernatural, a charm which they could not account for *.

The

* This idea, that the Divinity communicates itſelf more readily to women, has been ſpread very far over the earth; the Germans, the Bretons,

The northern climates require leſs reſerve between the ſexes; and theſe people, in overrunning Europe, introduced their opinions and their manners, with their arms; which conſequently brought about a revolution in the modes of life. During the invaſions, which continued ſucceſſively for four hundred years, they were accuſtomed to ſee the women mixed with the warriors; and that ſweet and timid modeſty, which obliges beauty to hide itſelf from the public eye, ceaſed to be regarded as a duty.

tons, and all the Scandinavians, have had the ſame opinions. Amongſt the Greeks, it was the women who delivered oracles. We know the reſpect the Romans had for the Sybils. We know of the Pythoneſſes of the Hebrews. The predictions of the Egyptian women had great credit in Rome under the emperors. Laſtly, amongſt the greateſt part of ſavages, every thing which had, or ſeemed to have, in it any thing ſupernatural, ſuch as religious ceremonies, medicine, and magic, were all in the hands of women.

Amongſt

Amongſt the ancients, the retirement of women was for a long time a part of the conſtitution, becauſe the government and the laws were ſupported by the morals.

In modern Europe, the monarchies founded by the Barbarians were every where altogether military, and as every thing depended upon force, they conſequently intereſted themſelves little about morals.

The mixture of the conquerors with a corrupt people, who had all the vices of their anceſtors, with their preſent unhappineſs, could not contribute towards giving them virtuous ideas. We therefore find that the people from the north, in the mild climate of Italy, united the vices of the Romans with the fierce warlike ſpirit of barbarians. Chriſtianity gave them laws, and modified, but did not change their character. Religion mixed itſelf with their cuſtoms, without altering the general ſpirit.

Thus,

Thus, by degrees, was laid the foundation of new manners, which gave the two ſexes a nearer reſemblance to each other, giving the women a ſpecies of power, and every where aſſociating gallantry with courage.

It is a circumſtance worthy of obſervation, that almoſt at the ſame time, there aroſe in the Eaſt a religion and a people, who eſtabliſhed and conſecrated for ever the domeſtic ſlavery of women; thus the ſame period in which their empire in Europe commenced, deſtined them for ever to ſlavery in Aſia.

The ſervitude of women, with the Mahomedan religion, was extended over the Eaſt by the conquering arms of the Arabs, as the gallantry of the North was extended over Europe by the conqueſts of the Barbarians.

The ſpirit of chivalry was already ſprung up in Europe, and preparing to advance its reign: this political and military

litary inſtitution was brought about by the courſe of events, and the natural inclination of the ſpirit of the times. Its true epoch commenced in the tenth century.

The religious and political inſtitutions in Europe, ſhaken by the fall of the empire, had not yet recovered any conſiſtent form; during the courſe of ſix hundred years, every thing was unfixed, that is to ſay, every thing was uncombined. The mixture of Chriſtianity with the ancient cuſtoms of the barbarians, occaſioned an almoſt perpetual ſtruggle and contrariety in the manners. The mixture of the rights of the prieſthood, and the rights of the empire, diſtracted the policy and the laws: the rights of the empire, and the rights of the nobility, diſtracted the government: the mixture of Arabs and Chriſtians in Europe, claſhed in religion. From ſo many contraſts aroſe confuſion and anarchy.

Chriſtianity,

Chriſtianity, which was now no longer in the time of its fervour, like unto an authority which had loſt half its force, had power only over the weaker paſſions, it was not ſtrong enough to ſuppreſs the violent ones. It excited remorſe, but could not prevent crimes. They made pilgrimages, and they plundered; they maſſacred, and afterwards did penance: robbery and debauchery mixed themſelves with ſuperſtition.

It was in theſe times, that the idle and warlike nobles, from ſentiments of natural equity, of religion and heroiſm, joined to reſtleſſneſs, aſſociated themſelves to undertake that which the public ſtrength either did not do, or did imperfectly. Their object was to combat the Moors in Spain, the Saracens in the Eaſt, the tyrants of caſtles and ſtrong holds in France and Germany; and, in imitation of Hercules and Theſeus, to ſecure ſafety to travellers; but, above all, to defend the honour and rights of the

the weaker ſex, againſt the imperious ſex, by whom they were often oppreſſed and treated with cruelty.

Immediately the ſpirit of a noble and generous gallantry united itſelf with this inſtitution. Every knight, in devoting himſelf to dangers, ſubmitted to the law of a ſovereign princeſs; it was for her he attacked and defended; for her he forced caſtles and cities; for glory and honour he ſhed his blood.

All Europe immediately became an immenſe theatre, where the warriors, ornamented with ribands and mottos of their miſtreſſes, combated in the field, to merit the approbation of beauty. Then fidelity joined itſelf to courage; love and honour were inſeparable.

The women, proud of their power, in guiding the hand of virtue, were honoured by the great actions of their lovers, and partook of the glory of the noble paſſions which themſelves inſpired. An unworthy choice would have diſgraced

ed

ed them. Tenderneſs never preſented itſelf without glory; and the manners every where breathed a ſomething of fierceneſs, of heroiſm, and ſenſibility.

Never perhaps did beauty exerciſe an authority ſo powerful and ſo gentle. From hence aroſe thoſe laſting paſſions, attachments of ſuch continuance as are to us inconceivable; and, becauſe of our lightneſs, our weakneſs, our mode of running unceaſingly after hopes and deſires, becauſe of our inward diſquiet, which torments and fatigues us, in ſearch of agitation without pleaſure, and movement without meaning, we believe them ſo romantic, that we daily turn them into ridicule on the ſtage, in our converſations, and our writings.

But it is nevertheleſs true, that theſe paſſions were nouriſhed by time, and irritated by difficulties; where reſpect retarded hope, where a lively ſenſe of ſelf-denial, which continually ſacrificed to honour, ſtrengthened the character and the

the minds of the two ſexes; giving more energy to the one, and more elevation to the other; changing the men into heroes, and inſpiring the women with loftineſs, which made them give up every thing to virtue.

Such was the ſpirit of chivalry. We know that it has given riſe to an innumerable multitude of writings in praiſe of, and to the honour of women. The verſes of the Troubadours, the Italian ſonnet, the plaintive romance, the poems on chivalry. The Spaniſh and French romances are likewiſe monuments of the ſame kind, raiſed in the times of noble barbariſm, and heroiſm mixed with abſurdity and grandeur.

In courts, in the liſts, at combats, and tournaments, every thing regarded women; and it was the ſame in the writings, for them only they writ, for them only they thought.

Oft times the ſame man was poet and warrior, who by turns ſung to his lyre,

and combated with his lance, for the fair one whom he adored *.

The times and the manners of chivalry, by introducing a paſſion for great enterprizes, adventures, and an almoſt incredible exceſs of heroiſm, inſpired the women with the ſame taſte.

In

* All theſe works, then ſo celebrated, are now only the object of a vain curioſity. They reſemble the ruins of Gothic palaces; almoſt all of them have the ſame foundation, and contain the ſame panegyrics. All the women were prodigies of beauty as of virtue. Nevertheleſs, the different ſpirit of the nations in which they were written, appears in the works. Thus thoſe of France are more natural, thoſe of Italy more laboured, the Spaniſh have more imagination; and thus it ought to be. The natural character in the firſt, is owing to the military frankneſs of a people, accuſtomed to fight, as to think; the Italian works owed their fineſſe to a wit more exerciſed by a commerce with ſtrangers, by the mixture of manners, by the multitude of little political intereſts. Laſtly, the pomp and the imagination of the Spaniſh writings, aroſe from an antique loftineſs,

In all ages, the two ſexes follow and imitate each other; they raiſe and ſtrengthen their minds, or grow corrupt and weak together. Therefore in thoſe days women were found in the armies, and under tents. They quitted the gentle and tender inclinations of their own ſex, for the courage and occupations of ours.

In the cruſades, the women, animated by the double enthuſiaſm of religion and valour, gained indulgences upon the field of battle, and died with arms in their hands, by the ſide of their lovers, and their huſbands.

loftineſs, from heads exalted by the heat of the climate, and above all, from their long connection with the Moors and the Arabs, which naturally had a prodigious influence over the manners, over the language, over the manner of painting objects, and even over the manner of ſeeing them; for if the genius of a people forms a language, the character of the language, in its turn, has influence over the genius of the people.

In

In Europe, women attacked and defended places; princeſſes were heroins, they commanded armies, and gained victories. Such was the celebrated Jeanne de Montfort, diſputing her duchy of Bretagne, and fighting herſelf.

Such likewiſe was Marguerite d'Anjou, active and intrepid, general and ſoldier; whoſe genius ſo long ſupported a weak huſband: ſhe made him conquer, replaced him upon the throne, twice broke his chains; but, oppreſſed by fortune and rebels, was at laſt obliged to ſubmit, after having in perſon engaged in twelve battles.

This military ſpirit amongſt the women, conformable to the times of barbariſm, when all is impetuous, becauſe nothing is regulated, and when every exceſs is an exceſs of ſtrength, continued in Europe more than four hundred years, breaking out from time to time on every great occaſion, and every tempeſtuous occurrence.

But there were times and countries in which this ſpirit particularly ſignalized itſelf; thus it was in the fifth and ſixth century, the epoch of Turkiſh invaſions in Hungary, in the iſlands of the Archipelago, and the Mediterranean. Every thing then combined to inſpire the women of theſe countries with courage.

Firſt the general ſpirit of the preceding ages; then the terror which the Turks themſelves inſpired; and the lively fear, which is increaſed by whatever is unknown; the difference of dreſs, which acts more powerfully than is generally believed upon the imaginations of a people; the difference of religion, from which ariſes a degree of horror; in ſhort, the prodigious difference of manners, and, above all, the domeſtic ſlavery of women; a ſyſtem which, although it is regarded in Aſia ſimply as a civil and political inſtitution, preſented itſelf to the women in Europe, who were threatened with it, under the odi-

ous

ous appearance of ſervitude and a maſter; where beauty and honour groaned under the double tyranny of love and pride.

All theſe ſentiments naturally inſpired in the women an intrepid courage of defence, and ſometimes even the courage of deſpair. This courage was augmented by the power of the Chriſtian religion, which promiſed eternal rewards for the ſacrifices of a moment.

After conſidering all theſe circumſtances, we ought not to be aſtoniſhed at finding, that when ſome beautiful women of the Iſle of Cyprus were ſent priſoners to Selin, for the purpoſe of being ſhut up in a ſeraglio, one of them, preferring death to ſuch a life, conceived the deſign of ſetting fire to the powder, and, after having communicated it to the others, put it in execution; nor that, in the following year, when a city in the ſame iſland was beſieged by the Turks, the women ran in crouds to mix them-

ſelves with the ſoldiers, and fought upon the breach, thereby contributing to ſave their country.

Neither ought we to be ſurpriſed, that under Mahomed the Second, a girl of the iſland of Lemnos, armed with the buckler and ſword of her father, who had fallen in battle, ſtopped the Turks, juſt as they were forcing a gate, and drove them even to the waterſide. We ought not to wonder that the Hungarian women ſignalized themſelves in a great many battles and ſieges againſt the Turks.

Nor, in fine, that in the two famous ſieges of Rhodes and Malta, the women ſeconded every where the zeal of the Knights, ſhewing upon all occaſions the greateſt reſolution; not only that momentary and impetuous courage which braves death; but the compoſed and difficult courage, which bears with labour and fatigue in every inſtance.

This

This epoch, and theſe numerous examples of courage amongſt the women, merit attention; but even, conſidering them only as revolutions in hiſtory. It is a ſingular ſpectacle to ſee the deſcendents of the famous Greeks, in almoſt all the iſlands of the Archipelago, in the courſe of fifteen hundred years, become Chriſtians, and ſubjects to the republic of Venice, fighting in their iſlands, and upon the coaſt of the ſea, to repulſe the conquering Tartars, who had brought to the country of Homer and Plato, a religion eſtabliſhed by an Arabian. The Hungarian women, taken with theſe ſame Tartars, do not preſent a more ſingular ſpectacle.

One cannot doubt but that it was the joint ſentiments of religion and honour which inſpired this courage: theſe being the two ſources which have in all times produced the moſt extraordinary actions amongſt women.

While they were thus fighting in Greece, in Hungary, and the iſlands in the Mediterranean, there was another change in Italy: Arts and letters were revived. This event produced a new alteration in the ideas and the employments of the celebrated women.

A general impulſe turned every mind towards the ſtudy of languages. There are times when the ſigns of ideas paſs for ideas themſelves, and when the knowledge of words paſſes for inſtruction; as certain politicians have believed that they ſhould enrich themſelves by blowing up mines.

Languages were then a ſpecies of enigmas, by underſtanding which knowledge was to be acquired. Before they thought, they would know the hiſtory of others' thoughts. Perhaps this ſtep is even neceſſary; for as, in the infancy of life, the mind collects materials for thinking; ſo, in the infancy of letters, ideas muſt be collected firſt, to be combined afterwards; for it is always

ways memory which gives activity to imagination.

As words lead to ideas, the ancient philoſophy conſequently revived with languages. Thoſe who had auſtere minds and inſenſible ſouls, who believed that reaſon was the more reaſonable for being dry; thoſe who ſet ſo high a value upon certain logic which chained down the imagination, as to neglect the merit of chooſing for themſelves, and fixing their own ideas, preferred the philoſophy of Ariſtotle. But the people of imagination and enthuſiaſm, who could pardon errors for the ſake of eloquence; thoſe who preferred a ſpirited and ſublime romance to dry logic, and intereſting illuſions to argumentative errors; thoſe, in ſhort, who had ſouls upon which even chimerical ideas of perfection, of order, and of beauty, could make an impreſſion at once pleaſing and profound, failed not to prefer the philoſophy of Plato.

Ariſtotleiſm, therefore, occupied the univerſities and the cloiſters; Platoniſm inſpired the poets, philoſophers of ſenſibility, lovers, and the ladies.

Theology, or the art of applying human reaſons to celeſtial things, was another ſpecies of knowledge, which at that time engaged attention. It was in faſhion, and ſo it ought, becauſe it was fuel which continually ſupplied the flame of religious wars; it was a ſupport to the court of Rome, and the certain road to arrive at honour; a great value was therefore ſet upon this ſcience; and the deſcendents of the ancient Romans rendered themſelves celebrated by the ſtudy of ſacred hiſtory, in the country where their anceſtors had become celebrated by victories.

After the times of conſpiracies, of tyrannies, and the petty wars, it was neceſſary to ſet a great value upon laws. Juriſprudence was then cultivated: they as yet knew not enough to become legiſlators;

giſlators; but they ſtudied the Roman laws, they commented, they explained, and they disfigured them.

Chivalry now began to be extinct in Europe; but it had left a tint of romantic gallantry in the manners, which from thence paſſed into the works of imagination; it produced a great many verſes, which expreſſed either real or imaginary paſſions, but always reſpectful and tender, changing their mode according to the manners of the country.

Thus in France, where the indolent nobles paſſed their lives in combats, they almoſt always painted love under the idea of conqueſt; ſo in Italy, where another ſpecies of ideas reigned, they continually made of love an adoration, or a worſhip.

This mixture of gallantry and religion, of Platoniſm and poetry, the ſtudy of languages and the ſtudy of laws, of ancient philoſophy and modern theology, was in Italy the general character of

all the illuſtrious men of thoſe times, and the ſame character prevailed amongſt the women who then diſtinguiſhed themſelves; never were there ſo many celebrated for knowledge.

Perhaps, that when the times of chivalry were paſt, in which ſo many women had diſputed for the reputation of valour with the men, they were deſirous to evince the equality of the ſexes in all things, by proving that they had underſtanding equal to their courage; and to ſubject ſtill more by their talents, thoſe whom they conquered by their beauty *.

The

* In the thirtenth century, there was the daughter of a Boulognois Gentleman, who gave herſelf up to the ſtudy of the Latin tongue, and the laws. At the age of twenty-three, ſhe pronounced, in the great church at Boulogne, a funeral oration in Latin; and the orator, to be admired, had no need either of her youth, or the charms of her ſex. At twenty ſix, ſhe took the degree of Doctor, and undertook to read publicly at her

The general ſpirit of this period is worthy of obſervation.

We

her houſe the Inſtitutions of Juſtinian. At thirty, her great reputation raiſed her to a profeſſor's chair, where ſhe taught the laws to a prodigious concourſe of people of all nations; ſhe joined the elegance of a woman to all the knowledge of a man, and when ſhe ſpoke ſhe had the merit to make her hearers forget even her beauty.

In the fourteenth century, the ſame example was renewed in the ſame city.

In the fifteenth, the ſame prodigy appeared there for the third time.

Laſtly, it is not uſeleſs to remark, that at this preſent time there is, in the ſame city of Boulogne, a philoſopher's chair filled with diſtinction by a woman.

At Venice, in the courſe of the ſixteenth century, we diſtinguiſh two celebrated women, one was *Modeſta di Pozzo di Porzi*, who compoſed with ſucceſs a great number of poetical works, ſerious, pleaſant, hiſtorical, and tender, and ſome paſtorals which were acted.

The other was *Caſſandre Fidele*, one of the moſt learned women in Italy, who writ equally well in the three languages of Homer, Virgil, and

We might then have ſeen women preaching, and mixing themſelves in controverſies :

Dante, in verſe and in proſe ; who poſſeſſed all the philoſophy of her age, and the ages preceding ; who by her graces embelliſhed even theology; who ſuſtained theſiſes with eclat, and many times gave public leſſons at Padua ; who joined to her ſerious knowledge agreeable talents, particularly muſic, and exalted her talents by her moral . She received homage from ſovereign pontiffs and kings ; and, that every thing relative to her might be ſingular, ſhe lived more than a hundred years.

At Milan we find a young lady of the illuſtrious houſe of Trivulce, who, while young, pronounced, in the ancient language of the Romans, a great number of elegant diſcourſes before the popes and princes.

At Veronne, in the fifteenth century, one *Iſotta Nogarolla* acquired ſo great a reputation by her eloquence, that all the ſovereigns were curious to hear her, and the celebrated men to ſee her.

At Florence, a nun of the houſe of *Strezzi* charmed the tedioufneſs and the idleneſs of a cloiſter, by her taſte for letters ; and, notwithſtanding

troverſies: women occupying the chairs of philoſophy and of juſtice: women haranguing

ſtanding her retirement, was known by her works, in Italy, in Germany, and in France.

At Naples there was one *Sarrochia*, who compoſed a famous poem upon Scanderbag, and during her life was compared to *Boyardo* and to *Taſſo*.

At Rome, *Victoire Colonne, Marquiſe de Peſcaire*, who paſſionately loved letters, and ſucceeded in them. While ſtill young, ſhe bewailed the loſs of a huſband, who was a great warrior, and paſſed the remainder of her life in ſtudy and melancholy, celebrating, in the moſt tender poetry, the hero whom ſhe loved.

In obſerving, in the ſame age, all the illuſtrious women of all nations, we find every where the ſame character, and the ſame kind of ſtudies.

In Spain we find one *Iſabelle de Roſeres* preaching in the great church of Barcelona; ſhe came to Rome in the time of Paul the Third; there ſhe converted the Jews by her eloquence, and commented with eclat. Likewiſe *Jane Scot*, who ſpoke before the cardinals and biſhops.

One *Iſabelle de Cordaud*, who was miſtreſs of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and who, with beauty, fame,

haranguing in Latin before the pope: women writing in Greek, and ſtudying Hebrew.

fame, and riches, had beſides the fancy to be a doctor, and took her degrees in theology.

One *Catherine Ribéra*, in the ſame age, compoſed Spaniſh poetry, partly devout and partly tender.

And one *Aloyſia Sigéa*, of Toledo, ſtill more celebrated, who, beſides Latin and Greek, had learned the Hebrew, the Arabic, and Syriac tongues, and writ a letter in each of theſe five languages to Pope Paul the Third; was afterwards called to the Court of Portugal, where ſhe compoſed ſeveral works, and died young.

In France we find a great number of women, who, in the ſame age, had the ſame ſort of merit; and above all, a ducheſs of Retz, who was celebrated even in Italy, and who aſtoniſhed the Polonois; when they came to aſk the Duke of Anjou for their king, they were ſurpriſed to find at the Court a young woman ſo learned, and who ſpoke the ancient languages with ſo much purity and grace.

In England we find the three ſiſters of the name of Seymour, nieces to a queen, and daughters to a regent, all three celebrated for their ſcience, and

Hebrew. Nuns were poets, women of the great world theologians. And it came

and their very fine Latin verſes, which, according to the ſpirit of thoſe times, were tranſlated in all parts of Europe.

Jane Gray, who was Queen only to mount upon a ſcaffold, and who, juſt before her death, read the famous dialogue of Plato upon the immortality of the ſoul, in Greek.

Mary Stuart, one of the moſt beautiful and moſt learned women of her age, who writ and ſpoke ſix languages, compoſed very fine verſes in French, and, whilſt young, pronounced at the Court of France a diſcourſe in Latin, wherein ſhe proved that the ſtudy of letters was becoming in women.

Laſtly, the eldeſt daughter of the famous Lord Chancellor of England, Sir Thomas More, whoſe learning was almoſt eclipſed by her virtues, and who, after having attended her father in his priſon with the moſt tender care, having conſoled him in his chains, having very dearly purchaſed the liberty of rendering him ſome funeral honours, having, at the expence of gold, redeemed his head from the hands of the executioners, was herſelf accuſed of two crimes, and

came to paſs more than once, that young girls, who had ſtudied eloquence, would, with the ſweeteſt countenances, and the moſt plaintive voices in the world, go and pathetically exhort the pope and the kings to declare war againſt the Turks.

The religious ſpirit which has at all times animated the female world, now ſhewed itſelf again; but it had changed its form. By turns it had made women martyrs, apoſtles, and warriors; and fi-

and put in chains: one crime was the having preſerved the head of her father as a relic, and the other the having preſerved his books and his works. She appeared before her judges with intrepidity; juſtified herſelf with that eloquence which virtue gives the unfortunate; commanded admiration and reſpect; and paſſed the reſt of her life in retirement, in melancholy and ſtudy.

This is the character of a few of thoſe women who in that epoch ſignalized themſelves in almoſt all nations; there were a much greater number, particularly in Italy, but we have only mentioned the moſt celebrated.

niſhed

niſhed by making them theologians and ſcholars.

It is incredible the value which was ſet upon the knowledge of languages; amongſt private perſons, in the convents, in the courts, and even upon thrones, the ſame ſpirit reigned throughout. It was a ſmall matter for a woman to read Virgil or Cicero. The mouth of a young Italian, a Spaniſh, or an Engliſh woman, ſeemed to be embelliſhed when ſhe repeated Hebrew ſounds, or pronounced a verſe in Homer.

Poetry, ſo charming to the imagination, and to ſuſceptible hearts, was embraced with tranſport by the women.

It was a ſort of new and intereſting employment, capable of flattering ſelf-love, and amuſing the underſtanding. Perhaps, even the void, which in ſpite of themſelves, and without even ſuſpecting it, they found in barbarous philoſophy, and an unprofitable ſtudy of logic and ſounds, made them find ſtill more charms

in

in an art which continually fills the imagination with pictures, and the ſoul with ſentiments.

In ſhort, many amongſt them deſired to acquire almoſt every ſpecies of knowledge, and ſome of them ſucceeded.

That which we have ſince learned to call ſociety, was then much leſs known; diſſipation and luxury certainly had not yet introduced the mode of ſitting ſix hours before a glaſs to invent faſhions. Time muſt be ſpent ſomehow; it was employed in ſtudy, and from thence the vaſt knowledge acquired by women.

Let us obſerve, that the ambition of undertaking every thing, is peculiar to the revival of letters; in the novelty, every one exert their utmoſt power, and it is only by trying our powers that they can be proved. The deſires, beſides, were then more eaſily ſatisfied, as they endeavoured rather to know than to think; and the minds of people being more

more active than extended, could not yet have attained to the ſecrets or the profoundneſs of ſciences; they muſt therefore have regarded them as a depoſit contained in books, and which memory would make them perfect in.

If, during this period, the women endeavoured to gain all the knowledge of men, the men on all ſides as ardently employed themſelves in panegyrics, to render homage to women.

The general ſpirit of the times, which had before made gallantry an attendant upon arms, now introduced the ſame gallantry into literature. Italy, in particular, abounded with this ſpecies of writing.

The firſt who ſet the example, was Boccace. It is well known that he paſſionately loved women, and was loved by them. He compoſed in their honour a work in Latin of *Illuſtrious Women*. In it he ran over all fabulous hiſtory, the Grecian hiſtory, the Roman hiſtory, and Sacred hiſtory. He joined

joined together Cleopatra and Lucretia, Floria and Portia, Semiramis and Sappho, Athalia and Dido; above all, he undertook to re-eſtabliſh the honour of Dido againſt Virgil. The panegyriſt there proved, againſt the poet, that the widow of Sichæus was never unfaithful to him. It is pleaſant enough to ſee Boccace, afterwards, make an eloquent and vigorous ſally againſt Chriſtian widows who marry again. The author cites St. Paul, and comments upon him, to a young widow, who, on account of her youth, excuſed herſelf for not following the example of Dido. This little piece, which is pleaſant, is ſerious and eloquent, and, what one ſhould not expect, the moral of Boccace is auſtere.

After him, more than twenty writers ſucceſſively publiſhed elogies upon celebrated women of all nations *.

Amongſt

* *Joſeph Betuſſi* tranſlated the Latin work of *Boccace* upon women into Italian; and in the ardour

Amongſt us, Brantome publiſhed a volume *des vies des Dames illuſtres*; but I obſerve

dour of his zeal enriched it with fifty new articles.

Francois Serdonati found the work not yet compleat: he collected from all hiſtories, profane or holy, barbarous or not barbarous, all the known names of women which ſtill remained, and ſwelled the collection to one hundred and twenty panegyrics.

This is not all; one *Philippe de Bergame*, an Auguſtin monk, who died in 1518, publiſhed in the fifteenth century a Latin work of illuſtrious women.

In the ſixteenth century, another work upon illuſtrious women, by *Julius Cæſar Capucio*, ſecretary of the city of Naples.

Another by *Charles Pinto*, in Latin, and in verſe.

Another by *Ludovico Domenichi*.

Another by *Jacques-Philippe Thomaſini*, a Venetian biſhop.

Another by *Bernardin Scardeoni*, canon of Padua, upon the illuſtrious women of Padua.

Another by *Francois-Auguſtin della Chiéſa*, biſhop of Saluces, upon women celebrated for literature.

Another by *Louis-Jacob*, of St. Charles, a religious Carmelite, upon women illuſtrious by their works.

In

obſerve that Brantome, like a French chevalier and a courtier, ſpeaks only of queens and princeſſes: in his book we find a panegyric upon Catherine of Medicis, and the famous Jane of Naples; and, in a ſtile which is diffuſe, ſimple, and natural, he juſtifies theſe two queens. He tells us that the firſt was without foibles, and the ſecond without crimes. He abſolves the one of her lovers, and the murder of her huſband. He abſolves the other of the civil wars, and the maſſacre of St. Bartholomew.

After Brantome, one Hilarian of Coſte, a monk, publiſhed two volumes in quarto, of eight hundred pages each, con-

In the Low Countries, a work by *Alexander Van-Denbuſche*, upon learned women.

Another by one *Simon Martin*, a monk in France, upon the illuſtrious women in the Old Teſtament.

Another by the famous *Peter* the monk, under the title of *Galerie des femmes fortes*.

I do a favour to many others, by omitting to name them.

taining panegyrics upon all the women of the fifteenth and ſixteenth centuries, who had been diſtinguiſhed either by valour, by talents, or by virtues. But, like a good prieſt, he only permitted himſelf to praiſe thoſe of the Roman catholic church. Thus, for example, he took great pains to avoid ſaying a word about Queen Elizabeth of England; but made a long and magnificent panegyric upon Mary, the firſt act of whoſe reign was the cauſing the Lady Jane Gray, aged ſeventeen years, and who had been called to the throne by the teſtament of the late King, to be put to death; and afterwards, in the ſpace of the five years which ſhe reigned, cauſed ſeven or eight hundred people, of all ranks and ages, to ſuffer death for their religious opinions. The elogies of this monkiſh panegyriſt amounted to one hundred and ſeventy.

But theſe are few, when compared with

with thoſe of Peter Paul Ribéra, an Italian, who publiſhed, in his language, a work intitled, *The immortal triumphs and heroic enterprizes of eight hundred and forty-five women.* It is difficult, without doubt, to find a more complete collection.

Beſides theſe great collections of elogies in honour of illuſtrious women, there were in Italy a great number of writers who addreſſed panegyrics to particular ladies.

Never perhaps were there ſeen, at any one time, ſo many princeſſes of improved underſtanding, as were then in that part of Europe. The courts of Naples, of Milan, of Mantua, of Parma, of Florence, &c. formed ſo many ſchools of taſte, between which there was an emulation of talents and of glory. The men diſtinguiſhed themſelves in arms, or by intrigue, the women by knowledge, and the Graces. And there were

were few of thoſe little courts which could not likewiſe boaſt of ſome man of great reputation for talents.

In a country which forms but one great ſtate, there is little improvement of talents; becauſe, where there is but one capital, one court, and but one center of intelligence, the diſtant provinces have neither the ſame activity, nor the ſame taſte. But in a country like Italy, divided into a multitude of ſtates, where almoſt every city forms a capital, genius equally ſprings up and expands itſelf every where.

This is undoubtedly one of the cauſes of the great ſuperiority of the Italians. The number of petty ſtates, which is their misfortune in politics, cauſes their grandeur in the belles lettres.

All the men, either of genius or of wit, attached themſelves to celebrated women, the ornaments of thoſe courts. And there were ſome amongſt them who dared to entertain the moſt lively paſ-

ſions for great princeſſes; eſteeming conditions by minds, and believing that genius made all equal *.

But others, who had imagination rather than paſſion, ſubſtituted for love the gallantry of wit, mixing with it the Platonic ideas which then reigned; and in a metaphyſical ſtile, they addreſſed to theſe ladies reſpectful hymns, under the title of elogies †.

The

* Boccace at the court of Naples, and Taſſo at the court of Ferrare.

† Amongſt ſo many elogies, or collections of panegyrics upon women, in verſe, in proſe, in diſcourſes, and in ſonnets, the moſt ſingular, without doubt, is that which was publiſhed at Venice in 1555, under the title of *The Temple of the divine Signora Jeanne d'Arragon, conſtructed to her honor by all the greateſt wits, and in all the principal languages in the world.* This lady, one of the moſt celebrated of the ſixteenth century, and married to a prince of the houſe of Colonne, was mother to the famous *Marc-Antonie Colonne*, who ſignalized himſelf at the battle of Lepante againſt the Turks. The homage of which we are ſpeaking, or the poetic conſtruction of this temple,

The ſame ſpirit, which in thoſe times produced ſo many panegyrics upon par-

temple, was ordained to her by a decree paſſed in honour of her, in 1555, at Venice, in the academy of *Dubbioſi*. Some among the members had before formed the idea of this worſhip, but they found the thought too happy, not to be adopted by the whole body: there was only one diſpute; they doubted whether *Jeanne d'Arragon* ſhould alone have the honors of the temple, or whether they ſhould aſſociate in her divinity the *Marquiſe de Guaſt*, her ſiſter, who was not leſs celebrated. But they judged, perhaps, that two divinities, two ſovereigns, and two women, do not love to find themſelves together.

Therefore, after grave deliberation, the academy determined, that the *Marquiſe de Guaſt* ſhould have her altars apart, and that *Jeanne d'Arragon*, her ſiſter, ſhould remain the only and excluſive proprietor of hers. They proceeded then to erect the temple; and the Latin, Greek, Italian, French, Spaniſh, Sclavonic, Poloneſe, Hungarian, Hebrew, Chaldean, &c. languages, were employed in the conſtruction of this monument; one of the moſt ſingular, undoubtedly, that gallantry has ever raiſed in honor of female merit.

ticular women, gave birth to a multitude of books upon the merit of the ſex in general, and the important queſtion of the equality or pre-eminence of the two ſexes.

The chief, and one of the firſt authors of this conſpiracy, was the much-celebrated Cornelius Agrippa, who was born in Cologne in 1486: he ſtudied all the ſciences, travelled over all countries, embraced all ſituations: he carried arms with diſtinction, was afterwards a theologian, a doctor of laws, a doctor of medicine: he commented upon the epiſtles of St. Paul in England, gave leſſons upon the philoſopher's ſtone at Turin, upon theology at Pavia, practiſed medicine in Switzerland: was attached ſucceſſively to three or four princes and princeſſes, and was thereby more unhappy: was unjuſtly accuſed, and pleaded his cauſe with courage: was twice put in irons, and always wandering, becauſe he ſuffered himſelf

to

to be led by a lively and ungoverned imagination, and becauſe he was incapable of being free, or of being a ſlave, as he neither had the courage to bear poverty, or to ſubmit to dependence. Having by turns excited pity, admiration, and hatred, he died in France, at the age of forty-nine years, having gained a great reputation, and ſuffered as great misfortunes.

It was in 1509, that he publiſhed his treatiſe upon *the ſuperior excellence of women over men.* Unfortunately, it was at that time his intereſt to pleaſe the famous Margaret of Auſtria, who governed the Low Countries; what a pity that ſo ſmall a circumſtance ſhould be connected with ſo fine a cauſe! His book is divided into thirty chapters, and in each chapter he demonſtrates the ſuperiority of women, by proofs theological, phyſical, hiſtorical, cabaliſtical and moral. He ſupported his ſyſtem by quotations out of holy writ, out of

fables, hiſtories, and the poets: he ſearched civil and canonical laws, quoted much, reaſoned little, and finiſhed by proteſting, that it was not any human intereſt, but duty, which induced him to write, becauſe that all men who know the truth ought to reveal it, and that at that time ſilence would have been a crime.

The Italians, when they read this work, muſt have regarded it as a theft, which a German had made from the authors of their country. But if he did not obtain the credit of invention, one may venture to ſay, that he made himſelf amends.

The Cardinal Pompée Colonne, Portio, Londo, Dominichie, Maggio, Bernardo Spina, and a great many others, all writ upon the perfection of women.

But the moſt ſingular work of this ſort, is that of Ruſcelli; it appeared at Venice in 1552. Ruſcelli came after all thoſe I have mentioned, and, being diſ-

ſatisfied,

satisfied, it seems, with the manner in which all before him had supported a truth so evident, he imagined new proofs, assuring himself that hereafter it would be impossible for any one to doubt. After he had copied and criticised Agrippa, he turned himself to sublime speculations, and undertook to prove, that the contemplation of beauty alone could render man happy upon earth, and raise him to the contemplation of God himself.

Such is the result and general tendency of his book; but that which I know not how to describe, is the impression which it makes upon the mind in reading, from a continual mixture of Platonism and theology; the name of God every where mixed with the names of women, Moses by the side of Petrarch and Dante, and in the same page, and almost in the same line, citations from Boccace and Saint Augustine, from Homer and Saint John.

Nothing, according to my taſte, can more ſtrongly paint the ſpirit of the ſixteenth century, in Italy in particular, nor more fully ſhow with what good faith they were, or were willing to be, at the ſame time, lovers, devotees, Chriſtians, Pagans, theologians, and philoſophers.

Perhaps it is even proper that this fantaſtical mixture ſhould appear, in a country where one often finds the ruins of an ancient temple, dedicated to Jupiter, by the ſide of a church, a ſtatue of Saint Peter upon one of Trajan's columns, and Madonas by the ſide of Apollo.

It ſeems, that even after Ruſcelli there were ſtill ſome incredulous people to perſuade, and that every body was not yet converted; for we find ſtill many books, Italian, Spaniſh, and French, upon the ſame ſubject *.

It

* In 1593, there appeared one by a celebrated Venetian lady whom I have already quoted (Modeſta

It muſt be confeſſed with truth, that amongſt this great number of works, there

deſta di Pozzo di Forzi) ſhe there maintained the ſuperiority of her own ſex over ours. Her work had the greateſt ſucceſs; and, unfortunately for her, that which perhaps aſſiſted, was that they could praiſe her without fear. She died juſt as the work appeared. Beſides this reaſon for praiſing her, men always ſee with pleaſure theſe ſort of works by women. Pride, which calculates every thing, makes them regard as a proof of their advantages, the efforts which are made to combat them.

In the ſeventeenth century, another Venetian lady (Lucrece Marinella) ſupported the ſame cauſe. Her work is entitled, *The Nobleneſs and the Excellence of Women, with the Defects and the Imperfections of Men.* The men, in reſpect to her at leaſt, had not the fault of being unjuſt; and ſhe had all the ſucceſs which beauty gives to wit.

In 1628, there was another work in Italian, *upon the Dignities of Women*; for this time the author was a man: it was *Chriſtophe Bronzini.* His work is in dialogues, and divided by days. One may conceive, by the extent of his plan, how

there are very few which are worthy to be read; and that there is not one in which

rich the ſubject appeared to him: he divided it into twenty-four days; the eighth, which turns upon marriage, has alone upwards of two hundred pages. *Bronzini*, in praiſing women, does not determine their rank, and leaves undecided the diſpute between the two ſexes.

But in 1650, there appeared a book in which the diſpute was decided clearly; the work was intitled, *Woman better than Man. Paradox by Jacques del Pazzo.* I cannot ſay, however, whether the women ought to be much flattered by the word paradox.

In Spain, a man of the name of John de Spinoſa, made, in the ſixteenth century, a dialogue and panegyric upon women. One may believe that he praiſed them with all the imagination of his country, and all the majeſty of his language.

In France we have a very ancient work upon the merits of women; it was tranſlated into Latin, to give it the greater range. The Italians themſelves have adopted it; and it was tranſlated into their tongue by *Vincent Calmera*.

The

which the queſtion propoſed is treated of. They have every where given authorities

The French women were not leſs zealous to ſupport the honor of the ſex than the Italians.

Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, and firſt wife of Henry the Fourth, who was, by turns, a devotee and a woman of gallantry, and more celebrated, as we know, for her wit than her morals, undertook to prove, in a work in form of a letter, *that woman is much ſuperior to man.*

Mademoiſelle de Gournay, who was worthy to have been adopted by Montaigne, writ alſo in favour of her ſex; but, more modeſt, or leſs hardy, ſhe ſet bounds to her pretenſions, and contented herſelf with equality.

Even this modeſty could not procure it the approbation of Madame *Seturman*, who was a native of Cologne, and had in her time a prodigious reputation, becauſe ſhe excelled in all the arts, was a painter, a muſician, a graver, a ſculptor, a philoſopher, a geometrician, and a theologian, and had beſide the merit of underſtanding and ſpeaking nine different languages. After ſhe had read this work of *Mademoiſelle de Gournay*, in honor of her ſex, ſhe confeſſed

thorities in the place of reaſonings, even when they ſpeak of women; but in this caſe,

that ſhe could not, and dare not, approve of all it.

In 1643 there was publiſhed at Paris another work, under the title of *The Generous Woman*; *who ſhews that her Sex is more noble, more politic, more valiant, more learned, more virtuous, and more œconomical, than the Male Sex.*

In 1673, there appeared another work, intitled, *The Illuſtrious Women*; *where by good and ſtrong reaſons it is proved that Women ſurpaſs Men.*

In 1673, another work, intitled, *The Equality of the two Sexes, a Philoſophic and Moral Diſcourſe, in which one ſees the importance of getting rid of one's prejudices.*

In 1675, the ſame author refuted himſelf, under another name, and publiſhed a treatiſe *upon the Excellency of Men, againſt the Equality of the Sexes*; but one may ſee that he refuted himſelf gently, and that he feared to have reaſon againſt him ſelf.

In 1691, there appeared a third edition of this work, which had ſome degree of ſucceſs.

In the ſame century, there was one *Mademoiſelle Romieu*, of a family of Languedoc, who again

caſe, as in many others, twenty citations have leſs weight than one reaſon.

It ſeems, that in order to determine this grand queſtion of ſelf-love, and of rivalſhip between the ſexes, it is neceſſary to examine the ſtrength and the weakneſs of organs, and the ſpecies of education which each ſex is ſuſceptible of; for what end nature formed them; how far it is poſſible to correct or change, and what is gained or loſt by departing from themſelves; and, laſtly, the inevitable and forcible effect which the difference of duties, of occupations, and of manners, naturally produce in the under-

again reſumed the ſubject of the ſuperiority of females, and attempted to eſtabliſh it by good proofs.

In ſhort, this opinion, or this diſpute, produced a ſort of literary war amongſt writers who were in other reſpects pretty obſcure; it gave riſe to works, to anſwers, and replies, which are at this time equally unknown.

ſtanding, the mind, and the character of the two ſexes.

When we ſpeak of talents and underſtanding, it is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh between the philoſophical judgment which meditates and diſcerns, the ſtrength of memory which collects, the lively imagination which creates, and the political or moral knowledge which governs.

We ought afterwards to obſerve in what degree each of theſe four ſpecies of merit are attainable by women. Whether the natural weakneſs of their organs, from which their beauty reſults; the inquietude of their character, cauſed by their imagination; the multitude and variety of their ſenſations, which make a part of their graces; can permit them to have that ſtrong and continued attention which is neceſſary to combine and connect a long train of ideas; an attention capable of aboliſhing all other objects to ſee only one, and to ſee that one entirely;

entirely ; an attention, which out of one idea can raiſe up a croud, all connected with the firſt ; or out of a great number of ſcattered ideas, extract one primitive and vaſt idea which reſembles them all.

This degree of underſtanding is rare even amongſt men ; I know it ; but ſtill there are numbers of great men who have poſſeſſed it. Theſe are men, who being raiſed to the very heighth of human nature, that they might look down and examine Nature's laws, have ſhewed to the ſoul the ſource of its ideas, aſſigned to reaſon its bounds, to motion its laws, to the univerſe its courſe ; they have created ſciences, in creating principles, and aggrandized the human mind, by cultivating their own. If not one woman has ever raiſed herſelf to a level with theſe great men, is it the fault of education or of nature ?

Deſcartes, injured by envy, but admired by two princeſſes, boaſted of the

philoſophic ſpirit of women. I dare not believe that his gratitude induced him to acquit himſelf towards beauty by a known error.

Without doubt he found in Elizabeth, and in Chriſtina, that docility, which led them to take honor to themſelves from liſtening to a great man; and to think that they partook of his genius, by following the train of his ideas. Perhaps likewiſe he even found in women clearneſs, order, and method; but did he find alſo the baſis of philoſophy, did he find that they knew how to doubt?

Their penetrating and rapid wit glances itſelf and repoſes, making more ſallies than efforts. That which they cannot comprehend in one inſtant, they either never comprehend, or they diſdain, or they deſpair of ever comprehending.

It ſhould therefore be leſs wonderful that women have not that obſtinate perſeverance, which alone inveſtigates and diſcovers great truths.

Imagination

Imagination ſeems to be much more naturally their talent. One obſerves, that there is in the imagination of women ſomething inexpreſſibly ſingular and extraordinary; every thing ſtrikes them, every circumſtance imprints itſelf with vivacity; their lively minds run over every object, and retain the images. Imperceptible powers, ſecret lines, rapidly tranſmit to them all theſe impreſſions.

The real world does not ſuffice them; they love to create for themſelves an imaginary world; they people it, they embelliſh it: ſpectres, enchantments, prodigies, all which belong to the extraordinaries of nature are their works, and their delight. They enjoy even their terrors; their ſouls exalt themſelves, and their genius is almoſt always bordering upon enthuſiaſm.

But let us ſee how far this imagination, were it applied to arts, could aſſiſt them in

in the talent of creating and deſcribing; whether they can have an imagination as ſtrong as they have quick and lively; whether their ſtile is not neceſſarily tinctured with their occupations, their taſtes, their pleaſures, and even with their foibles; I ſhould alſo aſk if their more delicate fibres muſt not fear the fatigue of ſtrong ſenſations, and make them ſeek the ſweets which would give them repoſe.

Man being always active, is expoſed to tempeſts. The imagination of a poet nouriſhes itſelf upon the ſummit of a mountain; on the borders of a volcano; upon the ocean; in the field of battle; or in the midſt of ruins; and never does he delight in tender and voluptuous ideas, until he has experienced the great ſhocks which agitate them.

But women, by their ſoft and ſedentary life, experiencing leſs the contraſt of ſweet and terrible, can they feel and paint even that which is agreeable, like

thoſe

thoſe who are thrown into contrary ſituations, and paſs rapidly from one ſenſation to another? Perhaps even from the habit of giving themſelves up to the impreſſion of the moment, which with them is very ſtrong, they muſt naturally have in their minds more images than pictures. Perhaps their imagination, though lively, reſembles a mirror which reflects every thing, but creates nothing.

Of all the paſſions, love, without doubt, is that which women feel, and which they experience the moſt; they experience the other paſſions but weakly, and by chance: but love belongs to them; it is the charm and the intereſt of their life, their very ſoul; they ought then to ſucceed in painting it.

But can they, like the author of Andromaca and of Phedre, or like the author of Zaïre, ſhew the tranſports of a troubled heart, in which are blended fury and love, which is now impetuous, now tender, which ſoftens and irritates

itſelf

itſelf by turns, which ſheds blood, and which in the end ſacrifices itſelf? Can they paint its changes, its furies, its rage? Surely no: and it is nature itſelf which prevents them. For nature has given to one ſex the audacity of deſires, and the right to attack; to the other defence, and ſuch timid deſires as attract in reſiſting. In the one ſex love is a conqueſt, in the other a ſacrifice.

It muſt therefore generally happen, that the women of all countries, and in all ages, know better how to paint a delicate and tender ſentiment, than a violent and terrible paſſion.

And beſides, by their duty, by the reſerve of their ſex, by the deſire of a certain grace which ſoftens all their expreſſions, they are obliged always to hide a part of their ſentiments; and muſt not the conſtant reſtraint which theſe ſentiments are kept under, by degrees weaken the ſentiments themſelves, and cauſe them to have leſs energy than

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the ſentiments of men, who, always audacious and violent with impunity, give to their paſſions what degree of loudneſs they pleaſe, and ſtrengthen them ſtill more by proclaiming them? A temporary conſtraint inflames the paſſions, a durable conſtraint deadens or extinguiſhes them.

In reſpect to the ability of arranging facts and ideas in the memory, ſo as to find them upon occaſion, as it depends very much upon habit and method, I ſee no reaſon why the two ſexes may not equally ſucceed in it.

Meanwhile, we muſt ſtill farther examine, whether women are not ſooner diſguſted with the exceſs of labour, which is neceſſary in order to the acquiring the quantity of materials from which erudition reſults. From this enquiry will it not appear, that their impatience, and the deſire of change which naturally belongs to fugitive and rapid impreſſions, muſt prevent them from following

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ing the ſame ſpecies of ſtudy for ſuch a number of years as is neceſſary for the acquiring profound and vaſt knowledge?

We know that there are qualities of wit, which prevent intenſe application; it cannot be the ſame hand which poliſhes the diamond, and which works the mine.

I now come to a more important object, the political or moral abilities, which conſiſt in the direction of one's ſelf or others. In order to weigh, upon this ſubject, the advantages or diſadvantages peculiar to each ſex, it is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh between the uſe of theſe abilities in ſociety, and their uſe in government.

In ſociety, the double intereſt of extending and preſerving power, keeps women conſtantly employed in obſerving. From hence they ought to have a thorough knowledge of mankind, and

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be able to develop and perceive all the foldings of ſelf-love, the ſecret foibles, the falſe modeſty, and the falſe grandeur; what a man is, and what he would be; the qualities which he diſcovers merely by a deſire of concealing them: his eſteem marked in his ſatires, and by his ſatires themſelves.

They muſt ſcrutinize and know characters; they muſt diſtinguiſh the calm pride, which is ſimply confined to the owner; the impetuous and unruly pride, which irritates and diſcovers itſelf; the vain ſenſibility, the tender ſenſibility, the warm ſenſibility under a coldneſs of manners; the lightneſs of pretenſion, and that which is in the heart.

The diffidence which is born with the character, the diffidence of worthleſſneſs, the diffidence of unhappineſs, the diffidence of the underſtanding: in ſhort, every ſentiment, and every ſhade of every ſentiment.

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As they ſet a great value upon opinion, they muſt very attentively conſider what it is which gives riſe to opinion; what it is which deſtroys or confirms it. They muſt know how to direct, without ſeeming to intend it; how they may conceal even this art, when it is once found out; the value which is ſet upon it by all thoſe amongſt whom they live, and how far it may be uſeful to them in governing.

In their commerce with the world, they know the great effects which are produced by little paſſions: they have the art to impoſe upon ſome, by ſeeming to know them; to keep others at a diſtance, by ſhewing that they are far from even ſuſpecting them: they know how to forge chains, by giving praiſes which are merited; they know how to raiſe a bluſh, by giving praiſes which are not merited.

All this is the fine and delicate knowledge which ſerves the ſex for leading-ſtrings

ſtrings by which to conduct men. Society is to them a harpſichord, every key of which they are well acquainted with, and they know beforehand what ſound each touch will produce.

But man, impetuous and free, ſupplying the want of addreſs by ſtrength, and conſequently being leſs intereſted to obſerve; hurried away, beſides, by the neceſſity of continual action, cannot without difficulty acquire that abundance of minute knowledge in moral things, the application of which occurs every inſtant; their calculations for ſociety muſt therefore be leſs quick, and at the ſame time leſs ſure.

Let us at laſt take a comparative view of the ſpecies of underſtanding, in the two ſexes, which is applicable to government.

In ſociety, women govern men by their paſſions, and the ſmalleſt ſprings have ſometimes the greateſt effects.

But in the government of ſtates, it is by grand views, by the choice of principles, above all, by diſtinguiſhing and employing great talents, that they can obtain ſucceſs. It is there that, ſo far from foibles being uſeful, they ought to be feared; there they ought to raiſe men above themſelves, in the room of lowering their genius.

Alſo, in ſociety, the art of governing conſiſts in flattering characters; on the contrary, the art of adminiſtration almoſt always conſiſts in combating them.

Even the knowledge of mankind, which is neceſſary in the two ſituations, is not the ſame: in the one they muſt know men by their weakneſs, and in the other by their ſtrength: in the one they draw forth defects for little ends, in the other they ought to diſcover the great qualities which belong even to theſe defects themſelves.

In ſhort, in the one ſituation it is neceſſary to ſearch the little corners in a great

great character; in the other, to be able to diſcover great qualities wherever they are, even in thoſe who have not yet ſhewn them; for there are ſouls incapable of acting but upon great occaſions.

Let us now enquire whether this ſpecies of underſtanding and obſervation belongs equally to the two ſexes.

I know that there are women who have reigned, and women who ſtill reign with eclat. Chriſtina in Sweden, Iſabel of Caſtille in Spain, and Elizabeth in England, have each of them merited the eſteem of their age and of poſterity.

We ſaw, in the year 1741, a princeſs whom we admired, whilſt we fought againſt her, defending the empire with equal genius and courage; and we at this day ſee the Ottoman empire made to tremble by a woman. But in general queſtions we muſt guard againſt taking inſtances for rules, and obſerve the ordinary courſe of nature.

It behoves us to examine whether women, who, according to the mode of ſociety, neither are, nor have it in their power to be ſo often in action as men, can ſo well judge of talents, the employments thoſe talents are adapted to, their uſe and their bounds; whether great views, and the application of great principles, with the habit of perceiving conſequences with the glance of an eye, are compatible with their wandering imagination, and with minds ſo little accuſtomed to generaliſing their ideas. All this, however, is neceſſary to form the character which governs. It is the vigour of the ſoul which gives activity to genius, which extends and which ſtrengthens political ideas: but this character can hardly be formed but by great commotions, great hopes, and great fears, and the neceſſity of diſcovering itſelf inceſſantly in action.

Is it not in general the character of women, that their minds are more pleaſing

ſing than ſtrong? Does not the rapidity of their imagination, which ſometimes makes affection go before thought, render them, in the choice of men, more ſuſceptible both of prejudice, and of error?

In fine, ſhould one calumniate them much, ſhould one even riſk their diſpleaſure, if one dared to tell them, that in the diſtribution of their eſteem they ought to ſet a little too much value upon agreeableneſs, and to believe that an amiable man muſt more readily be a great one?

This is perhaps the defect with which one may juſtly reproach Elizabeth: the taſte of her ſex penetrated itſelf through the cares of a throne, and the greatneſs of her character. One is ſorry, in certain inſtances, to ſee little weakneſſes mix themſelves with the views of great ſouls. Perhaps if Mary Stuart had been leſs beautiful, her rival had been leſs barbarous.

A fondneſs for coquetry, as we are well aſſured, gave to Elizabeth favourites, whom ſhe judged of more as a woman than as a ſovereign. She too eaſily believed that the art of pleaſing her conſtituted genius.

This queen, ſo famous and ſo much honoured, exerciſed over the Engliſh an almoſt abſolute power; which perhaps is not very ſurpriſing, for in general women upon the throne are more inclined to deſpotiſm, and more angry at bounds to their authority than men.

The ſex to whom nature has aſſigned power by giving ſtrength, have a certain confidence, which raiſes them in their own eyes; they have no occaſion to atteſt to themſelves the power of which they are ſure. But weakneſs, finding itſelf aſtoniſhed at the power it poſſeſſes, precipitates this power on all ſides, to aſſure itſelf of it.

Great men have perhaps more of that kind of deſpotiſm which belongs to lofty ideas;

ideas; and women of high rank, more of the deſpotiſm which is the reſult of their paſſions; the deſpotiſm of females is much oftener a ſally of the mind, than the fruit of a ſyſtem.

There is one thing which favours the deſpotiſm of women who govern; it is, that men confound the empire of their ſex with the empire of their rank; that which they would refuſe to rank, they will yield to beauty. Beſides, the power of women, even that which is arbitrary, is not often cruel; they have oftener the deſpotiſm of fantaſies, than of oppreſſions. The throne itſelf cannot cure them of their tenderneſs, and they carry in their ſouls a counterpoiſe to their power *.

* It follows from hence, that in a limited monarchy, women who are upon the throne incline more to deſpotiſm, and in a deſpotic country, they bring the government nearer to monarchy by their gentleneſs; a truth which is ſo well proved by experience.

After having compared the two ſexes by talents, if we compare them by virtues, we ſhall find a different account.

Experience and hiſtory ſhew us, that in all ſects, in all countries, and in all ranks, women have more religious virtue than men; having naturally more ſenſibility, they have more occaſion for an object which conſtantly occupies their mind; they carry to the Almighty a ſentiment which has need to pour itſelf forth, and which would otherwiſe be a crime. Deſirous of happineſs, and finding little around them, they precipitate their minds towards a different life, and towards a different world. Extreme in their deſires, the bounds of this world are too narrow to ſatisfy them.

In reſpect to duties, they are more docile, they reaſon upon them leſs, and underſtand them better. More ſubjected to decorum, they believe ſtill more in that which decorum reſpects; leſs occupied and leſs active, they have more time

time to contemplate; having fewer avocations abroad, they are more forcibly affected with the ſame idea, becauſe it appears before them conſtantly. More affected by the objects of ſight, they more enjoy the parade and dreſs of ceremonies and temples, and the religion of the ſenſes ſtill increaſes the religion of the heart.

In ſhort, reſtrained every where; prevented from opening their hearts to men, becauſe of the conſtraint of their ſex; from opening them to women, by an eternal rivalſhip; they ſpeak at leaſt of their pleaſures and their pains to the Supreme Being, who knows them, and often depoſit in his breaſt the weakneſſes which are dear to them, and which are unknown to the world. It is in his preſence they recal to their mind their ſweet errors; they rejoice even in their ſenſibility, without reproaching themſelves; and are tender without remorſe, becauſe, being under the eye of the Al-

mighty, they find a ſecret delight even in repentance and combats.

It ſhould ſeem then, in conſequence of this character, that the religion of women ought to be more tender, and the religion of men more ſtrong; the one belonging more to practice, and the other to principles; and that in exalting religious ideas, the women ſhould be nearer to ſuperſtition, and the men to fanaticiſm. But if ever fanaticiſm takes hold of a woman, her more lively imagination carries her ſtill farther, and the fear of being tender makes her ſtill more fierce. That ſenſibility which compoſed a part of her charms now only helps to make her frightful.

The religious virtues are very nearly connected with the domeſtic ones; and without doubt theſe ought to be common to the two ſexes: but here we find the advantage is on the ſide of the women; at leaſt they ought to have more

of the virtues, which are to them more neceſſary.

In the early part of life, timid and without ſupport, the daughter is more attached to her mother; never quitting her, ſhe learns to love her more. Trembling, ſhe ſecures herſelf near to her protector; and the weakneſs which gives her grace, ſtill more augments her ſenſibility.

Being become herſelf a mother, ſhe has other duties, and every thing invites her to fulfil them: then the ſtate of the two ſexes is very different.

Man, employed in buſineſs or in arts, exerts the ſtrength of his faculties, and, commanding the world, finds pleaſures in his induſtry, in his ſucceſs, and even in his efforts. Woman, being more ſolitary, and having much fewer reſources, her pleaſures muſt ariſe from her virtues; her amuſements are her children. It is near the cradle of her infant; it is in ſeeing the ſmiles of her

daughter, and the games of her ſon, that a mother is happy; and where are the tender feelings, the cries, the powerful emotions of nature? where is the character, at once intereſting and ſublime, which feels all things in exceſs? Is it in the cold indifference, and the rigid ſeverity of ſo many fathers? No; it is in the warm impaſſioned hearts of mothers.

It is a mother, who, by a movement as quick as it is involuntary, throws herſelf into the waves to ſnatch up her child who falls in by imprudence. It is a mother who throws herſelf into the flames, to take out of the middle of a conflagration her infant who ſleeps in his cradle, and whom we ſee, pale and diſhevelled, with tranſport embracing her dead ſon in her arms, cooling her lips upon his frozen lips, trying by her tears to warm again his inſenſible aſhes.

Theſe expreſſive and heart-rending ſorrows, which at once make us tremble with

with admiration, with terror, and with pity, do not, nor cannot ever belong but to women.

They have about them, at theſe moments, an inexpreſſible ſomething, which raiſes them above this world, which ſeems to diſcover to us new ſouls, and to extend the ordinary bounds of nature.

Conſidering even the duty from whence the fidelity of the marriage ſtate ariſes; which of the two ſexes muſt be moſt attached to it? to violate it, which of the two has moſt obſtacles to overcome? which is beſt defended by education, by reſerve, by that modeſty which repulſes even that which they moſt deſire, and ſometimes diſputes with love its moſt tender rights?

Let us conſider the power which nature gives to the firſt attachment, and the firſt marriage, over a heart full of tenderneſs, which, until that time, has never permitted itſelf to love: conſider the force of opinion, which reigns with ſuch

ſuch imperial ſway over one of the two ſexes, and which, like a capricious tyrant, often applauds in the one ſex, the ſame weakneſs for which it ſo much diſgraces the other.

Nature, attentive to the preſervation of the morals of women, has herſelf taken care to ſurround them with the moſt pleaſing defences; ſhe has rendered vice more painful to them, and fidelity more intereſting.

Indeed we muſt allow, that it has ſeldom been through women, that diſorders have began in families; and that in thoſe periods when the ſex has been moſt corrupt, the depravity has not began with them; they have only followed the example of a corrupt age.

After the religious and domeſtic virtues, come the ſocial virtues, and with them the virtues of ſenſibility; theſe are all the ſweet and affecting paſſions. In the

the firſt claſs of theſe are friendſhip and love.

It is an intereſting queſtion, Which of the two ſexes have the qualities moſt proper for friendſhip. Montaigne, who has ſo well known, or gueſſed at nature, and who has, two hundred years ſince, anticipated a part of the philoſophy of our age, has poſitively decided the queſtion againſt women: but upon this ſubject he pronounced more than he examined; and it is remarkable that throughout his book, he has done but little juſtice to women: perhaps he was like that judge, who feared ſo much to be partial, that he made it his principle always to determine the ſuit againſt his friends.

If I had converſed with Montaigne upon this ſubject, I ſhould have preſumed to ſay to him, You allow, without doubt, that friendſhip is the affection of two hearts, which love to ſupport themſelves one upon the other.

Now

Now it ſeems, that of the two ſexes, men, who have their heads and their hands more occupied, who have more extenſive engagements, who are more free, who can more loudly ſpeak their ſentiments, who in proſperity ſhew more pride, who in adverſity are more mortified than ſoftened, who in every ſtate have a conſciouſneſs of their ſtrength, and of acting up to it, can the moſt eaſily diſpenſe with the commerce and the ſweet effuſions of friendſhip. But women, tender and weak, and for that reaſon having the greater need of ſupport; being more expoſed to private chagrins and ſecret pains; having more of thoſe ſorrows of the heart which affect their ſenſibility rather than their pride; who in the world are almoſt perpetually forced to act a part, and carry with them a croud of ideas which are a burden, becauſe they are obliged to conceal them; women, in ſhort, for whom things are nothing, and perſons all; women, in whom

whom tenderneſs is condemned, and in whom indifference is an unnatural ſtate, and who know ſcarcely any thing but to love and to hate; muſt, it ſhould ſeem, have a more lively ſenſe of the freedom and the pleaſure of a ſecret converſation, and the ſweet confidences which friendſhip gives and receives.

Montaigne would not have failed to reply to me, You judge of women according to nature; judge of them in their ſtate of ſociety, and above all, the ſociety of great cities.

See if their general deſire to pleaſe, an inclination more frivolous than profound, and much more vain than it is tender, muſt not contract their hearts, and in ſome meaſure ſtifle even their ſenſibility.

See, if, flattered by continual praiſes, and accuſtomed to the moſt pleaſing empire, they can every day ſubmit to ſacrifice to that ſweet equality which friendſhip requires.

See, in ſhort, if their friendſhip with us, as it is more timid, muſt not therefore have more reſerve; and what is that but a friendſhip which is upon its guard, where all the ſentiments are ſhaded with a veil, and where there is almoſt always a barrier between the ſouls?

I do not ſpeak to you of their eternal friendſhips; they were not believed in my age, and perhaps it is the ſame in your's. But I ſhall aſk you, how far they can love one another, in the world particularly, where they conſtantly compare themſelves, and are compared, with each other, where a look divides them, where their pretenſions are multiplied, where they have the rivalſhip of rank, of beauty, of fortune, of wit, and even of ſociety: for ſelf-love always calculates, always meaſures, lives to every thing, irritates itſelf with every thing, and nouriſhes itſelf even with that which irritates it.

No, (Montaigne might have added) friendſhip

friendſhip is not in ſhow, in jargon, in vain phraſes, ſtill more ridiculous in thoſe who believe, than in thoſe who ſay them. It is a ſentiment which demands energy in the ſoul, and a ſolidity of underſtanding and of character. It is a holy union, and almoſt religious, which, by a ſpecies of worſhip, entirely conſecrates the friend to his friend. It is a paſſion which transforms two wills into one, and makes two beings live with the ſame life and the ſame ſoul.

Friendſhip is impoſing and ſevere; whoever would fulfil all its duties, muſt be able to ſpeak the maſculine and auſtere language of truth; muſt have a courage which nothing can aſtoniſh, neither ſacrifices nor dangers; muſt, above all, have that uniformity of character, which women, from the variety and changeableneſs of their inclinations, rarely have, a uniformity which will make the friend to feel, to think, and to act like his friend upon all occaſions, and in every inſtance.

What

What do I ſay? People do not aſſociate themſelves together ſtrongly without great intereſts; and women, by their ſtate itſelf, are devoted to repoſe. Nature made them, like flowers, to ſhine ſweetly in the garden which makes them grow: but trees produced and raiſed in the midſt of tempeſts, and by their very firmneſs more expoſed to be torn up by the winds, have more occaſion to ſupport themſelves the one by the other, and to ſuſtain themſelves by union.

From all theſe objections, it ſhould follow, perhaps, that friendſhip in women muſt be more rare; but it muſt be allowed, that where it is found it muſt be more tender.

Men in general have more of the practice than the graces of friendſhip. Sometimes, in condoling, they wound; and their moſt tender ſentiments are not very enlightened, in reſpect to thoſe minute circumſtances which are of ſo much value. But women have a refined

fined ſenſibility, which makes them ſee every thing; nothing eſcapes them; they divine the ſilent friendſhip; they encourage the timid friendſhip; they gently conſole the friendſhip which ſuffers. With the fineſt inſtruments, they manage an aching heart; they compoſe it, and prevent it from feeling its agitations. They know, above all, how to give value to a thouſand things, which have no value in themſelves.

We ought then, it ſeems, to deſire the friendſhip of a man upon great occaſions; but for the happineſs of all our days we muſt deſire the friendſhip of a woman.

Women have the ſame delicacies, and the ſame niceneſs, in love as in friendſhip. Men, perhaps, inflame more ſlowly and by degrees. The paſſions of women are more rapid; they either ſpring up at once, or not at all; their paſſions, by being more repreſſed, muſt be more ardent, they nouriſh them in ſilence, and irritate them by combating with them. Fears and alarms

mix

mix themſelves with the inquietude of their love, and by occupying it, ſtill increaſe it the more.

When a man is ſure of his conqueſt, he will have more pride; but a woman only becomes more tender. The more her confeſſion coſts her, the more dear her lover becomes to her. She grows more attached by the ſacrifice ſhe makes. If virtuous, ſhe rejoices in her refuſals; if culpable, ſhe rejoices in her repentance *.

Therefore women, when their love is paſſion, are moſt conſtant; but when their love is only inclination, they are the moſt changeable; becauſe they have not then felt the trouble, the ſtruggles, and that ſweet ſhame which ſo ſtrongly impreſs the ſentiment on their hearts: it has only affected the ſenſes and the imagination; ſenſes go-

* One might here make a thouſand objections; but I ſpeak only of women who are of their ſex.

verned

verned by caprice, and an imagination which exhauſts itſelf by its ardour, and which in an inſtant blazes out, and expires.

After friendſhip and love come benevolence, and the compaſſion which unites the heart to the unhappy. Every one knows that this is more particularly a female quality.

Every thing diſpoſes the ſex to tenderneſs and pity: wounds and ſickneſs ſhock their more delicate feelings; the images of miſery and loathſomeneſs offend their gentle ſoftneſs. The images of diſtreſs and trouble more profoundly affect a heart which is tormented by its own ſenſibility. They muſt therefore be more eager to ſuccour. They have, above all, that tenderneſs of inſtinct which acts before it reaſons, and has already ſuccoured the diſtreſſed, while man is deliberating.

Their benevolence is perhaps leſs enlightened, but more active; it is alſo

ſo more reſpectful, and more tender: what woman has ever failed in reſpect to the unhappy?

But let us examine whether females, ſo alive to friendſhip, to love, and to compaſſion, can raiſe themſelves up to the love of their country, which extends itſelf to all its citizens, and to the love of humankind, which includes all nations.

I do no mean to depreciate the love of one's country. It is the moſt generous of ſentiments, at leaſt it is that which has produced the greateſt men, and which has raiſed up thoſe heroes of antiquity, whoſe hiſtory daily aſtoniſhes our imagination, and accuſes our weakneſs.

But if we would uncover this ſecret way, and examine more nearly of what it conſiſts, we ſhould find, that patriotiſm, amongſt men, is almoſt always a mixture of pride, of intereſt, of property,

ty, of hopes, the remembrance of their own actions, or the ſacrifices which they have made for their countrymen; and a certain factious enthuſiaſm, which deprives them of themſelves, to tranſport their exiſtence entirely into the body of the ſtate.

Now it is evident, that ſcarcely any of theſe ſentiments can belong to women. Becauſe that being, in almoſt all the governments in the world, excluded from poſts of honour and truſt, they can neither obtain, nor hope, nor attach themſelves to the ſtate, from the pride of enjoying places. And having little ſhare in property, and oppreſſed by the laws even in that which they have, the form of legiſlation in all countries muſt be to them pretty indifferent.

Having neither acted or fought for their country, they have none of thoſe flattering remembrances which bind men to it, by the vanity either of labours or

of virtues. In ſhort, exiſting more in themſelves, and the objects of their attachments, and perhaps leſs eſtranged from nature by thoſe ſocial inſtitutions in which they have leſs ſhare, they are of courſe leſs ſuſceptible of the enthuſiaſm which makes men prefer the ſtate to their families, and their countrymen to themſelves.

I know I ſhall here be objected to, and reminded of the famous women of Rome and Sparta. I anſwer, that we muſt not compare ancient republics with our modern inſtitutions.

You again object to me the prodigies performed by the Dutch women, in the revolution of the Seven provinces. I anſwer, that the enthuſiaſm of liberty can do every thing; there are times when nature is aſtoniſhed at being no more herſelf; and that great virtues ſpring up from great misfortunes.

But if patriotiſm is little made for

women, the general love of humankind, which extends itſelf over all nations and all ages, and which is a ſort of abſtract ſentiment, ſeems ſtill leſs to coincide with their nature.

In order to love any thing, it is neceſſary to have a clear idea of it in one's own mind. It is only by dint of multiplying and enlarging his ideas, that the philoſopher is able to ſurmount ſo many difficulties; to paſs from a man to a people; from a people to the whole human race; from the time in which he lives, to the ages which are ſtill to come; from that which he ſees, to that which he does not ſee.

The minds of women do not take in ſo extenſive a field; they collect their thoughts and ideas around them, and are willing to confine them to thoſe things which are intereſting to themſelves. Thoſe extenſive ideas appear to them out of nature. One man is more to

them than a nation; and the time in which they live, more than twenty ages in which they ſhall not exiſt.

Amongſt the ſocial virtues, there are ſome which may more peculiarly be called the virtues of ſociety, becauſe they are the delights and the bands of it, they are uſeful in every inſtance, and are in common life of the ſame uſe as ready money is in commerce. Such is that ſweetneſs which renders the character more gentle, and gives to the manners an attractive charm; the indulgence which makes thoſe pardon defects, who have no need of pardon for themſelves; the art of being blind to the viſible follies in others, and of keeping the ſecret of thoſe which are hidden; the art of diſguiſing their own advantages, rather than humiliate thoſe who have them not; the art of never tyranniſing with will or with deſires, and of never tormenting with the weakneſs which frets itſelf in obeying;

and

and the complaiſance which makes them adopt the opinions which they have not; the foreſight which divines the fears, and encourages the thoughts of others; the freedom which inſpires a pleaſing confidence; and, in ſhort, all that politeneſs, which perhaps is not virtue, but is ſometimes a happy falſehood, which gives rules to ſelf-love, and enables pride every inſtant to paſs by the ſide of pride without rubbing.

We will not purſue the compariſon between the two ſexes through all theſe ſentiments: but it is remarked, that in general the women correct that which violence would harden a little too much in the commerce of men. The delicacy of the female hand ſoftens, and, as one may ſay, poliſhes the paths of ſociety.

It is plain, that their politeneſs is a conſequence of their character: it belongs to their underſtanding, to their reſerve, and even to their intereſt; for the

moſt agreeable ſociety is a place of conqueſts.

There are few men who have made it their ſyſtem to ſend away every perſon content, and ſo much the worſe for thoſe who have; but many women have had this project, and ſome of them have ſucceeded. The more extenſive their ſociety is, the more they improve in this ſpecies of merit; becauſe that then they have a greater number of little intereſts to reconcile, and characters to reunite. It is a more complicated machine, and requires ſuperior abilities to aſſort its movements *.

It

* In general, people are more poliſhed, as they are leſs to themſelves and more to others, as they ſet a greater value upon opinion, as they are more jea'ous of diſtinction, and perhaps as they have fewer reſources and greater means of having them. In ſhort, whether we ſpeak of particular perſons, or of nations; or of whichever ſex, or whatever rank, when we ſay they are

It is true, that this finiſhed politeneſs muſt ſometimes lead to falſity. It puts the word affection in the room of affection itſelf. From hence the reproach ſo often repeated againſt women.

One muſt allow, that by their nature they are more induced to every ſpecies of diſſimulation. It is ſtrength which uſes all its motions with liberty; but weakneſs, and the art of pleaſing, muſt meaſure

are polite, we always ſuppoſe them to be idle, becauſe we admit the neceſſity of their living together. And it is from hence ariſes the art of managements, the neceſſity of attentions, and all the little enjoyments of vanity. People accuſtom themſelves to give what they receive, and to expect as much as they give. Thus the delicacy of ſelf-love produces all the refinements of ſociety; as the delicacy of the ſenſes produces the ſearch after pleaſures, and the delicacy of wit, (which perhaps is only the reſult of the two others) produces the fineneſs of taſte. One ſees how all theſe objects are connected together, and how they all belong to women.

every motion. Thus women, through their timidity, learn firſt to hide the opinions which they have, and finiſh by pretending to thoſe which they have not.

In man ſincerity is often no virtue, becauſe it is often without effort, and is perhaps the conſequence of an open and impetuous temper. But the ſincerity of women, when it is real, muſt always be a merit. Sometimes deceitful men make a ſhow of frankneſs by ſyſtem. Women ſeldom pique themſelves upon this ſpecies of hypocriſy, and when by chance they do, they give their frankneſs as a mark of confidence, to pleaſe ſtill more; it is a ſacrifice which they make to friendſhip.

It ſeems then that men have frankneſs from pride, and women by addreſs. The one may tell a truth without any other object than truth; the other tells

tells even truth with an intention to oblige.

The falſity of a man always leads to his own intereſt, it is only for himſelf; the falſity of a woman is generally to pleaſe, ſhe tells it for the ſake of others: of theſe two untruths, the firſt deceives you, the other only ſeduces you.

In ſhort, flattery is equally to be found in the two ſexes; the flattery of men is often diſguſting from its baſeneſs; in women it is more light, and appears to be ſentiment. Even when it is *outrée* it is amuſing, and is never vile; its motive and gracefulneſs ſaves it from contempt.

To finiſh this parallel, which is already too long, we muſt examine in the two ſexes thoſe rigid virtues which produce equity, and the forcible and vigorous qualities which produce courage; but all the diſtinctions which can be made in

theſe poiñts, are parts of the ſame principles.

In regard to equity, from whence the duties of an auſtere and impartial juſtice ariſes, if of the two ſexes there is one which almoſt always inclines before it judges; if a lively imagination, which influences, produces averſions or likings, which are received without examination; if an uniform and inflexible rule muſt fatigue through caprice; if, in fine, particular ideas influence more than general ones; we muſt then allow that the rigid equity which determines leſs by circumſtances than by rules, and leſs by perſons than by things, will be leſs uſual with that ſex: therefore we ſhall rarely find in women the law of pronouncing without love or hatred; their juſtice generally lifts up a corner of the veil, to ſee whom it is they are to condemn, or to abſolve.

Examine hiſtory; you will ſee them always

always bordering upon excefs of pity, or excefs of vengeance. They want that ftrength of calmnefs which knows when to ftop; every thing which is moderate is a torment to them.

A lady of great wit * has faid, that the French feem to have efcaped from the hands of nature before they had any thing in their compofition befides air and fire. She might have faid fo of her fex, but without doubt fhe was unwilling to betray their fecret.

It would be very daring to pretend to decide how far the different fexes are by nature fufceptible of courage: but this word courage is vague, and, to fix an idea of it, one muft diftinguifh the different forts.

Every one knows the diftinction between the courage of the mind and conftitutional courage; but each of thefe

* *Madame de Graffini; Lettres Peruviennes.*

two ſorts ſtill ſubdivide themſelves. Thus, in the courage of the mind, we find a courage from principle, which enables a perſon to brave opinion; a courage of the will, which gives energy to the ſoul, and prevents it from being governed; a courage of conſtancy, which ſupports the idea of long labour, and even long labour itſelf; a calm courage, which in delicate circumſtances ſees all, and ſees rightly.

In the conſtitutional courage, we find courage in affliction, which knows how to ſuffer; a courage in perils, either the audaciouſneſs which dares, or the intrepidity which waits the event; an habitual courage, which ſhews itſelf at all times, and is applicable to all occaſions; and a courage of enthuſiaſm, which is like the fever of an ardent ſoul, it ariſes, and is extinct, and can brave at one time, that which would terrify it at another.

I leave it to my readers to make the application

plication of these details. But we ought to remark, that of every species of courage, the sort of which women have the greatest share, is the courage which bears affliction; this arises, without doubt, from the multitude of evils to which they are subject by nature. Be this as it may, they had rather a hundred times suffer than displease, and regard opinion more than affliction.

We have seen also, in dangers, examples of extraordinary courage in women. But this is always caused by some great passion, or some idea, which moving them violently, raises them above themselves. Then their imagination, which inflames them, makes them conquer even their imagination itself; and their ardent sensibility, directed entirely towards one object, stifles the little habitual sensibilities which give birth to fear, and which produce weakness. They have in these shocks a resolution which dares every thing, and goes

goes much farther than habitual reſolution; which even from its continuance loſes its force, and muſt neceſſarily be farther from exceſs.

Upon the queſtion of the equality or the ſuperiority of the two ſexes, theſe are a part of the objects which ought to be conſidered and put in the balance.

But to treat the queſtion judiciouſly, one ought to be at the ſame time a phyſician, an anatomiſt, and philoſopher; to have judgment and ſenſibility; and, above all, have the unhappineſs to be perfectly diſintereſted.

The ſixteenth century, in which this queſtion ſprung up and was agitated, was perhaps the epoch of all the moſt brilliant for women. After that time one finds much fewer works in their honor.

The period of general enthuſiaſm for ſerious gallantry was paſſing away; the entire extinction of chivalry in Europe; the abolition of tournaments; the religious wars in Germany, in England, and

and in France; the introducing women in courts, and the manners which ſpring up from idleneſs; the ſpirit of intrigue, and beauty being regarded as an inſtrument to fortune; in ſhort, the new taſte of ſociety, which began to expand itſelf every where, a taſte which poliſhes the manners, by corrupting them, and which, by mixing the ſexes oftener, teaches them to ſeek each other more, and eſteem each other leſs; all theſe cauſes contributed to diminiſh a ſentiment, which, to be profound, has need of obſtacles, and of a certain ſtate of the heart, which makes it feel itſelf honoured by its deſires, and eſteem itſelf even in its weakneſs.

Mean time theſe revolutions advanced but ſlowly in France. Under Francis the Firſt, who gave the ſignal of corruption in this nation, we find that love ſtill retained its jealouſies, its vengeances, its hatreds, and crimes; which ſhewed the manners.

Under

Under Catherine of Medicis, there was a mixture of gallantries and fury: the Italian ardour began to join itſelf to the French voluptuouſneſs; all was intrigue; they diſcourſed of carnage in the rendezvous of love, and while they danced, meditated the ruin of the people.

Meanwhile, the very cares of policy and war, the factions, the parties, and ſome romantic ideas which ſtill remained, gave a certain vigour to the mind, which ſhewed itſelf even in thoſe ſentiments which women inſpire.

Under Henry the Fourth, there aroſe a more gentle ſpecies of gallantry: he had the manners of a Chevalier, and the foibles which ſpring from ſenſibility. It ſeemed honourable to imitate him; and his courageous and ſplendid courtiers, accuſtomed to actions of eclat, and to conqueſts, introduced into gallantry the ſame noble ſpirit which they had ſhewn in the field. They cor-

rupted themſelves every where, but they no longer debaſed themſelves.

In the reign of Lewis the Fourteenth, the ſpirit of controverſy, which then began to ſhew itſelf, made metaphyſics mix themſelves with gallantry: witneſs the famous theſis which the Cardinal Richelieu made to ſupport itſelf upon love. This theſis, which one would be tempted to underſtand as a ſort of parody, and a comic attack, was really a ſerious deſcription of the manners of thoſe times. The civil wars had brought controverſy into faſhion: the new taſte in letters made people miſtake ſcholaſtic form for ſcience: falſe wit ſprung up from the deſire of wit, and the inability of having it.

Gallantry, which deſtroys nothing, and joins itſelf with every thing, becauſe it has nothing in it profound, and is rather a turner of the underſtanding than a ſentiment; gallantry adopted all theſe mixtures, and was forming for itſelf a

new

new jargon, which was at once myſtical, metaphyſical, and romantic: then nothing was heard of but diſſertations upon the delicacies and the ſacrifices of love.

People never diſcourſe much upon that which they feel deeply: nevertheleſs, even theſe converſations, and theſe maxims, ſhewed a turn of imagination, which, while it permitted gallantry, joined to it tenderneſs; and always connected with the idea of women, an idea of ſenſibility and reſpect.

The regency of Ann of Auſtria, and the war of the minority, was a ſingular epoch. France was in anarchy, but the people of France mixed pleaſantry with battles, and ballads with factions. In thoſe times the women took the lead in every thing. They had all, in that period, that ſpecies of unquiet agitation which the ſpirit of party produces; a ſpirit leſs unſuitable to their character than

than one is aware of. The one party gives the motion, the other receives it.

Every one, according to her views, caballed, writ, conſpired. The time of aſſemblies was the night, and a woman in her bed, or upon her couch, was the ſoul of the council; in theſe aſſemblies they decided whether to negociate, to reſiſt, to embroil, or to reconcile themſelves with the court. The ſecret foibles produced the greateſt events; love preſided in all the intrigues; they conſpired together to take a lover from his miſtreſs, or a miſtreſs from her lover: and a revolution in the heart of a lady, almoſt always announced a revolution in public affairs.

The women in thoſe times appeared often in public, and at the head of factions *; and they added to their ornaments,

* Each lady had her department: *Madame de Montbazon*, beautiful and brilliant, governed the Duke of Beaufort; *Madame de Longueville*, the Duke

ments, ſcarfs which diſtinguiſhed their party. One would have thought one's ſelf tranſported into the land of romance, or the times of ancient chivalry. In the drawing-rooms, and in the field, inſtruments of muſic were mixed with implements of war, cuiraſſes with violins, and beauties amongſt the ſoldiers; they often viſited the troops, and pre-

Duke de la Rochefoucault; *Mademoiſelle de Chevreuſe*, the Coadjuteur; the devout and amorous *Mademoiſelle de Saujon*, the Duke of Orleans; and the Ducheſs of Bouillon, her huſband. Nevertheleſs, *Madame de Chevreuſe*, who was lively and ardent, gave herſelf up to her lovers from inclination, and to affairs from neceſſity. And the Princeſs Palatine, who was by turns friend and enemy to the great Condé, by the ſtrength of her underſtanding, much more than by her charms, conquered all thoſe whom ſhe wiſhed to pleaſe, and whom it was either her fancy or her intereſt to gain. It is known that ſhe had at once a warm heart and a firm mind, and that ſhe appeared almoſt as romantic in love as politic in the intereſts of ſtate.

ſided,

ſided at the Councils of war *. Their devotion joined itſelf to the ſpirit of faction, as the ſpirit of faction did to gallantry.

Read the memoirs of the times, and you will ſee that Mademoiſelle fulfilled the moſt ſacred duties of religion, before ſhe embarked on her voyage, when ſhe went to cabal againſt the king.

* There was a regiment raiſed under the name of Mademoiſelle ; and Monſieur writ to the ladies, who had followed his daughter to Orleans, *Les Meſdames les Comteſſes Marechales de camp dans l'armée de ma fille contre le Mazarin.* Nobody is ignorant of the exploits of this princeſs, who had all the ſpirit which was wanting in her father : we know that at Orleans ſhe almoſt ſcaled the walls, while they deliberated whether they ought to receive her. At the gate of St. Antoine, (while the great Condé acquired ſuch glory againſt Turenne, who was only greater becauſe he fought for his prince,) ſhe was in the midſt of the dead and the wounded, giving in Paris thoſe orders which no other perſon could or would give, and made herſelf obeyed from reſpect, by thoſe who might have diſobeyed her from duty

While

While ſhe was at Orleans, ſhe carried on the civil war, and went to compline. She gave regular audience to the rebels at return from maſs. The women caballed in the morning, and viſited the convents at night; and never were there ſo many ladies of the court become Carmelites.

It ſeems that in the midſt of troubles the mind is carried towards every thing with the greater impetuoſity, and the imagination, heated by ſo many movements, precipitates itſelf equally towards war, towards love, towards religion, and towards cabals.

In reſpect to the ſpirit of gallantry, it had very nearly the ſame character, or the ſame ſymptoms, as under Lewis the Thirteenth, except that the civil war, and that degree of exaggeration which extraordinary movements give to the mind, ſtrengthened that little ſhadow of chivalry which ſtill adhered to love.

Ann of Auſtria had brought to the court of France a part of the manners

of

of her country; it was a mixture of coquetry and reſerve; that is to ſay, a remnant of the ancient and brilliant gallantry of the Moors, joined to the pomp and haughtineſs of the Caſtilians. Then the dances, romances, comedies, and intrigues, were all Spaniſh. Maſquerades, night ſcenes, and adventures, became all the mode, only that the vivacity of the French made them ſubſtitute violins in the room of the languiſhing ſounds of the guitars.

They acted violent paſſions which they did not feel, and thought it an honour to avow publicly the paſſions which they did feel: it was regarded as a duty by men, to render homage to beauty. Then the ſmalleſt things had a value, and the gift of a bracelet, or receipt of a letter, was an event in life. They talked as ſeriouſly of gallantry or love, as of the gaining of a battle *

Theſe

* We know the verſe of the Duke de la Rochefoucault to Madame de Longueville:

Pour

Theſe were the manners which formed the ſpirit of the firſt romances, in the age of Lewis the Fourteenth; romances without end, becauſe they believed that every attachment muſt be long; ſerious, becauſe they regarded a paſſion as an important affair in life; replete with adventures, becauſe they imagined that love muſt turn the head;

Pour meriter ſon cœur, pour plaire à ſes beaux yeux,
J'ai fait la guerre aux Rois, je l'aurois fait aux Dieux.

To merit her heart, to be pleaſing in her fine eyes,
I have made war againſt Kings, and would make war againſt the Gods.

The Duke de Bellegarde, who was loudly declared the lover of the Queen, in taking leave of her to go to the command of the army, requeſted as a favour that ſhe would be pleaſed to touch the hilt of his ſword. And, during the civil war, *Monſ. de Chatillon*, in love with *Mademoiſelle de Guerchi*, carried one of her garters tied about his arm in a battle.

abounding

abounding in converſation, becauſe they made love a ſcience which had its principles, and a method; heroic above all, becauſe it brings the greateſt men at the feet of the ladies, and the opinion was then, that love ought to be governed by honour, and, in the room of endeavouring to abaſe its object, raiſe itſelf by it.

Theſe were the manners which governed our theatre; even Corneille complied with this taſte, and placed love amongſt the intereſts of ſtate, and vengeances amongſt conſpiracies and parricides.

I believe it was in conſequence of theſe manners prevailing in the infancy of Lewis the Fourteenth, that he acquired, in reſpect to women, the character of being at once amorous and great. While he was young, and under the influence of an ardent paſſion, he wiſhed to raiſe one of his ſubjects to the throne; but by his greatneſs he overcame

his inclination. He conceived a paſſion no leſs violent for Henriette of England, which his greatneſs enabled him to ſubdue. By his greatneſs, although a lover, he was always king, and purſued even pleaſures with dignity.

But although Lewis the Fourteenth always covered voluptuouſneſs with decency; the manners of women were, nevertheleſs, by a neceſſary revolution, doomed to undergo a change in his reign.

Until now the vices of the court had never been the vices of the people: the different orders of the ſtate were more ſeparate. They were till now in the times when the great Lords had a perſonal grandeur, which had rendered them at once formidable to the court and tyrants to the people. The more power the nobles poſſeſſed, the greater was the diſtinction of ranks. Their pride forbade them to mix, and intimated to their inferiors their diſtance.

The ſupreme deſpotiſm humbled all ranks; but the ſubaltern deſpotiſm was increaſed and multiplied, the more to ſeparate the great from thoſe who dared to pretend to an equality. In this ſtate, preſumption and inſolence of manners were in a manner regarded as the privileges of rank. Even the vices of thoſe who oppreſſed, were to inferiors a part of their oppreſſion; and people are ſeldom inclined to imitate thoſe whom they hate.

In theſe times, the manners of the court could not be communicated, but through the chief magiſtrates, and the rich people. But the magiſtrates were more auſtere, and more retired, dividing their time between the ſtudy and the adminiſtration of the laws. They aſtoniſhed the court, and imitated it not. In regard to the rich people, the greateſt part of them were only rich, the diſgrace attendant upon certain fortunes prevented their familiarity with the

great. Luxury, which alone gives an appearance of grandeur to the rich, was the vice but of ſome particular perſons, and not the general malady. The great had not yet occaſion to ſell their names, the others had not yet learned to think of purchaſing them; as people were more occupied with their duties, they had leſs time to loſe, therefore leſs ſociety.

The manners of all thoſe who were not of the court were then more ſavage; and that ſort of ancient vulgarity was ſtill another barrier between the rich and the grandees, becauſe it was a ſubject of ridicule. This contraſt in manners marked where pride ought to ſtop, to avoid being confounded with the people.

There was as little means of intercourſe between the capital and the provinces as between the different ranks: fewer great roads, leſs ſecurity, fewer carriages, and, above all, leſs luxury

and

and neceſſity, and of courſe leſs of that unquiet activity which requires change of place, and which makes men crowd to the capital in ſearch of gold, of ſervitude, and of vices. Each one remaining upon his patrimonial eſtate, contributed to prolong the national manners.

But under Lewis XIV. every thing was changed. The courtiers had now only titles without power, and were reduced to an appearance of grandeur in the room of a real importance; they therefore turned themſelves towards ſociety, and to the city. The inequality of fortunes augmenting by the inequality of taxes, gave the greater value to riches; the great had more wants the rich more pride; the poor, corrupted by their deſires, leſs morality; all ranks drew nearer to each other.

The magnificence and the luxury of the prince ſtill ſtrengthened theſe ideas; the great contracted debts from neceſ-

ſity, and ruined themſelves through pride. People preſently manage thoſe whom they deſpiſe. As the great were obliged to part their titles, in order to preſerve them, the gold drawn from the poor became the mediator between the rich and the nobles.

Even the magiſtrates changed their character; all who went to Verſailles imitated the manners of the court. As ſociety became more poliſhed, the difference of conditions diſappeared, the ruſt of ancient cuſtoms was rubbed off: all orders mixed.

People ran from the provinces; the miſery of the country, the luxury of towns, ambition, commerce, the reputation of the prince and his conqueſts, the romantic feaſts of his court, the pleaſures even of the underſtanding, all joined to draw them to the capital; they came in crowds to get rid of their prejudices, to bluſh for their morals, and at once

once to poliſh, enrich, and corrupt themſelves.

It is very eaſy to conceive the influence which all theſe changes, and this univerſal mixture of people, muſt have had over the manners of women; gallantry became the mode, and freedom of manners a grace. All the world imitated the court; and from one end of the kingdom to the other the vices circulated with the pleaſures.

Another revolution accompanied this of manners. There aroſe a taſte for letters as well as ſociety; and in this ſtate it ſhould ſeem that the taſte for wit would communicate itſelf to the women. But, as taſte forms itſelf ſlowly; as the natural and the graceful are ſometimes perceived by a certain delicate inſtinct, which feels what it has not the power of defining; as one is induced to believe, that whatever is difficult ought to be admired, and that to be better than others, we muſt be ſingular; as that

which is falſe ſometimes appears brilliant, becauſe it preſents a new face, and hides a part of the object to make the reſt appear; as, in ſhort, all which is faſhionable is exaggerated, one muſt at firſt ſight take vivacity for wit.

This was the caſe with all thoſe women who aſpired at diſtinguiſhing themſelves: they created expreſſions which they admired much, becauſe they underſtood them little; they ſubſtituted ſingular words in the place of ideas which they had not; and, to avoid being vulgar, they became ridiculous.

Every thing contributed to this deluſion; the Italian and Spaniſh books, which were then very much in vogue; Voiture's letters, Mademoiſelle Scuderi's romances, the real admiration for that which we call *precieuſes*; the converſations at Madame Rambouillet's hôtel; laſtly, ſociety, and the impoſing name of Madame de Longueville, who in her youth had been at the head of factions againſt

againſt the court, but now grown old, and without lovers, as without a cabal, ſhe diverted herſelf with writing metaphyſics upon love, and diſſertations upon wit, and ſincerely gave Voiture the preference to Corneille.

It is well known that Moliere, in attacking this ridiculous ſyſtem, made it diſappear. Some women afterwards gave themſelves up to letters, and ſome of them cultivated the ſciences; but this was far from the general ſpirit. In this enlightened age it was unpardonable for a woman to inſtruct herſelf. It ſeems that the nation, diſtinguiſhed by its valour and by its graces, was always afraid of having any other ſpecies of merit; a taſte for letters was regarded as a ſort of derogation from the great, and a pedantiſm in women. This ſecret contempt, worthy of the Franks, our anceſtors, muſt undoubtedly have influenced the ſex, which is moſt governed by opinion: ſome women indeed there were,

who dared to act contrary to this prejudice, but it was deemed a crime.

As even good things may have their excesses, and as a bon mot often passes for reason; so, by associating that which is ridiculous with that which is useful, they easily brought it about to decry knowledge in women.

Despreaux and Moliere graced this prejudice with the authority of their genius; their abilities insured them success, but they both of them overcharged the tables to raise a laugh; and one may venture to say, that they found the effect more theatrical than true.

In fact, if we thoroughly consider this question, it will appear, that in a country and in an age like ours, which is prodigiously distant from that first innocence which loves the pure pleasures of retirement, and the happy ignorance of every thing foreign from duty; in an age when the general manners are corrupted by idleness; when all the vices

are

are communicated every where by the rage of moving from one place to another, and where it is impoſſible ever to replace or raiſe up virtues but by enlightening the underſtanding, we muſt allow, that in the room of diſcouraging women from acquiring knowledge, and inſtructing themſelves, it would be proper to encourage them in it.

Armande and *Philaminte* are moſt ridiculous beings, I confeſs, and deſerve to have juſtice done them: but the good man *Chriſale*, who in his groſs city bluntneſs is perpetually for returning the women to their thimble, their needle, and their thread, and would not have a woman read, or know any thing but to grow old in her kitchen, is a being not to be found in the age of Lewis the Fourteenth*, but of two hundred years

 before:

* Obſerve, in the *Femmes Sçavantes*, the ſeventh excellent ſcene of the ſecond act. It is plain that I do not here pretend to blame this character of

before: in this Moliere ſeemed to forget that the manners of one age are incompatible with the manners of another, and that by a certain connection with virtues and vices, there is a neceſſary progreſs in the modes of life, which it is impoſſible to reſiſt.

One might ſay that it is particularly by the legiſlature of the theatre, that this principle of Solon ought to be adopted, *not to give the beſt laws poſſible, but the beſt relatively to the people and the times.* Had Moliere adopted this principle, he would not have contraſted the two mad women, whom he has drawn, with his Chriſale, nor have given, as the reaſonable man of the piece, one who is in reality only a reaſonable man of a former age. He would rather have

of Chriſale as a comic character; it has an excellent effect, and in this light *Chriſale* and *Martine* are truly the two witty characters of the piece: I only examine them on the moral ſide of the queſtion, and independent of all theatrical effect.

painted

painted a woman young and amiable, who had received, in reſpect to knowledge and wit, the beſt education, and who ſtill preſerved all the graces of her ſex; one who knew how to think profoundly, and affected nothing; who covered her knowledge with a pleaſing veil, and had always ſuch eaſy manners, that her acquired wiſdom appeared like nature; who knew how to value and to feel the greateſt things without diſdaining ſmall; who uſed her underſtanding to make the commerce of friendſhip more dear; who, in ſtudying and knowing the human heart, learned to have greater indulgence for foibles, and greater reſpect for virtues; who, in ſhort, regarded her duties before all things, but placed knowledge next to her duties; and who only employed that time in reading, which the world left her free from ſocieties and from duties, with a view to embelliſh her mind by cultivating her reaſon!

Had this been the contraſt, perhaps then

then Moliere's comedy, which is in ſo many reſpects admirable, and excellent in all points, had it been written for an age farther back, might, in the room of a ridicule, have preſented to the corrupt age of Lewis the Fourteenth a leſſon, and have ſhewn the happy uſe of knowledge in women, contraſted with its abuſe *.

Let this be as it will, the women, in the time of Lewis the Fourteenth, were obliged to hide themſelves to gain inſtruction, and bluſh for their knowledge, as in the leſs poliſhed ages they would have bluſhed at an intrigue.

Some of them, however, dared to throw off that ignorance which was looked upon as their duty; but the greateſt part of them made a ſecret of their hardineſs: or, if they were ſuſpected, they

* I do not know whether Moliere could have found ſuch a model in the age of Lewis the Fourteenth; but I well know that he might have found one, had he lived in the preſent age.

took

took their meaſures ſo well that they could not be convicted; they had only a friend for a confident, or for an accomplice.

One may perceive by this, that this ſpecies of merit, or defect, could not be very common in the age of Lewis the Fourteenth.

But from the general politeneſs of the age, there was another ſort of accompliſhment very much in faſhion amongſt the women, and eſpecially at court. This was that amiable ſpirit which has only the eaſy graces, and is not ſpoiled by knowledge, or at moſt is ſo little tinctured with it as to be pardonable; which writes very agreeable trifles, and could ſo far expoſe itſelf as ſometimes to compoſe very pretty verſes; which in converſation always charmed without ſeeming to intend it, pleaſed all the world, without mortifying any one, and even when it was the moſt brilliant, its manner made it excuſable, and ſhewed

plainly

plainly that it was not a fault. Such, as every one knows *, was the wit of *la Fayette*, of *Ninon*, of *la Suze*, of *la Sabliere*, and of *Sévigné*, of *Thianges*, and of *Monteſpan*, of the Ducheſs of *Bauillon*, and of the fair *Hontenſe Mancini* her ſiſter; laſtly, of Madame *de Maintenon*, who

* Amongſt the number of women whom I am going to mention, *Madame de la Fayette*, and *Madame de Sévigné*, were always diſtinguiſhed: *Madame de la Fayette*, ſo well known by her romances, ſo ingenious, and full of ſecret ſenſibility, joined a ſolid underſtanding to all the agreeableneſs of character and of wit: it was ſhe who firſt introduced into romances ſentiments inſtead of adventures, and amiable men in the room of heroes; ſhe did in her line what Racine did in his. In ſubſtituting intereſts in the room of prodigies, ſhe ſhewed that ſhe had rather affect the heart than aſtoniſh.

Madame de Sévigné, in her letters writ by chance, has made, without intending it, an enchanting work. In her ſtile, ſo full of imagination, ſhe has created almoſt a new language. She every moment throws out expreſſions which wit

who in her youth was the delight of Paris, before ſhe inhabited the court, and was condemned to greatneſs and diſquiet.

The greateſt part of theſe women were celebrated by the poets, who to pleaſe them, knew how to take their ſtile.

wit could never make, and which a ſoul endued with ſenſibility could only find. She has given to the moſt common words a character and a ſoul. All the turns of her phraſes are movements, but movements undeſigned, and have therefore the greater grace. The moments which ſhe painted fixed themſelves under her pencil. and one ſees them ſtill. How ſhe excuſed herſelf praiſed herſelf, complained of herſelf! How ſweet is her joy, and her melancholy has charms! How ſhe intereſts all nature in her tenderneſs! If there was a being ignorant of what ſenſibility is (nearly in the ſame manner as there are blind and deaf by birth) and that we wiſhed to give him an idea of that ſpecies of ſenſe which he has not, one ought to make him read *Madame Sévigné's* letters.

It

It is remarked, that in all the verſes of Boileau one does not find the name of a ſingle woman of his time. To merit his praiſes, it was neceſſary to be a king, a miniſter, or a doctor of the Sorbonne. But la Fontaine more tender and more gentle, has praiſed almoſt all the women of the court, who were celebrated either for their agreeableneſs or their wit. He had a heart formed to be ſenſible of their merits, and the ſtrains which were ſuited to ſing them; in his careleſſneſs, and his lazineſs, he ſeems to run over all with indifference; but he felt the graces of women by inſtinct, as by inſtinct he recounted them all in his verſes.

Racine, very diſdainful, although very much a courtier, was in general more led to ſatire than to praiſe; he has celebrated but two, Madame de Maintenon in Eſther, and Henriette of England in a dedication; but Racine

is,

is nevertheleſs the moſt eloquent panegyriſt of women which they have had.

Quinaut, without having perhaps ſung any one, has celebrated them all; he has made a world on purpoſe for them, which ſtill exiſts, where there are no other manners than thoſe of the ancient chivalry; where the Gods, the heroes, and the men are all lovers by duty; and where, under pain of ridicule, every one is obliged to think, to ſing, to fight, to live, to die, to mount to heaven, or deſcend to hell, only for a woman.

Fléchier and Boſſuet have immortalized one. They have celebrated virtues, as others have celebrated charms. But a funeral oration is of all compoſitions that which is the leaſt proper to paint the character even of a man, becauſe, as there is a vaſt body, and it muſt be filled up, they muſt almoſt always exaggerate the proportions; becauſe there are qualities upon which the orator muſt be ſilent, and he muſt ſometimes ſuppoſe motives,

tives, where they were not, he muſt ſuppreſs details, which nevertheleſs ſhew the real character more than general aſſertions; and becauſe he muſt give to him whom he praiſes in pomp, a general character, and which is often different from the one he has had; in fine, becauſe a funeral oration repreſents a figure, and that a figure of repreſentation is hardly ever a figure from the life.

There is a ſtill ſtronger reaſon why this method is leſs capable of giving a true idea of the merits of women; their lines are ſo difficult and fine, they defy ſo hard a pencil.

Therefore almoſt all funeral orations of women deſcribe nothing, and they may more properly be called ſermons than portraits. Boſſuet has celebrated two women, and their characters are intereſting; but one is rendered intereſting by great events, and by a throne overthrown; the other by a terrible and tragical death.

Of

Of the four orations which Fléchier has made, the beſt, without diſpute, is that upon Madame Montauſier; but has he ſucceeded in painting her * ? does one

* Madame de Montauſier, known before her marriage by the name of *Julie d'Angennes*, was daughter of the celebrated Marchioneſs de Rambouillet; ſhe was prodigiouſly praiſed in her infancy, by all the fine wits of her time. Every one knows the hiſtory of *the garland of Julie*. It was the fineſt flowers painted upon vellum, and under each one was a madrigal; theſe madrigals were compoſed by the moſt celebrated men of the age: the great Corneille, for his part, made three; and the author of the Cid, of Rodogune, and of Cinna, compoſed the tulip, the orange-flower, and the immortal white. Fléchier, in his funeral oration, neither could nor ought to deſcribe this ſpecies of learned gallantry, which formed the character of thoſe times. He dared indeed to ſpeak of the hôtel de Rambouillet; but how? He talked to us of *cabinets where the underſtanding purifies itſelf*; *of the virtue which they there revered under the name of the incomparable Arténice*; *in fine, of a court numerous without confuſion*,

one learn from him, what one knows from the anecdotes of the times, that the great reputation for wit, which Madame Montauſier had in her youth, aroſe from this, that Voiture uſed to compoſe her letters at her mother's houſe? does one learn from him, that as ſoon as ſhe was at court, ſhe forgot all her friends, and that it was for her that the Duke of *la Rochefoucault* writ this maxim, *that there are people who appear to merit certain ſtations, of which they themſelves ſhew they are unworthy as ſoon as they are arrived at them?* In the room of all this, Fléchier, faithful to

confuſion, modeſt without conſtraint, learned without pride, and poliſhed without affectation. Theſe antitheſes are very fine, without doubt; but do they well ſhew that which ought to be the queſtion? do they ſhew the ſort of education, good or bad, which a young perſon muſt have received amongſt ſo many diſſertations and verſes, metaphyſics and wit, between Mademoiſelle Scuderi and Madame de Longueville, between Sarrazin and Voiture?

his

his diviſions, and to the pulpit, is obliged to ſubſtitute antitheſes, phraſes, and virtues.

After all the women praiſed with livelineſs by the poets, or with pomp and gravity by the orators, there are ſtill two in a different rank and order, who nevertheleſs arrived at the greateſt reputation; one of them is Mademoiſelle Scuderi, ſo famous in thoſe times, who lived to the age of ninety-five years, more than ſeventy of which ſhe employed in writing, with grace, ſome pretty verſes which are ſtill remembered, and with aſtoniſhing eaſe great volumes, which now are read no more. It is certain, that for a time ſhe turned people's heads, and that ſhe had as much influence by her romances, as Boileau has ſince had by his ſatires and his taſte.

The other is the learned Mademoiſelle Febver, ſo well known by the name of Madame Dacier. Her merit, it is true, was not the merit of a woman; but ſhe very

very early determined to be nothing leſs than a man; and although it was not after the manner of Ninon, ſhe did not fail to make enthuſiaſts. As her two natural tongues were thoſe of Terence and Homer, ſhe often received madrigals in Greek and Latin. The moſt learned perſons in Europe conſpired to praiſe her; at length, la Mothe celebrated her in verſe, la Mothe, ſo well known by his literary diſputes with her. When each of them had changed their ſtrain *, he pronounced in her honour, in the French academy, one of thoſe rational and ſenſible odes which he ſo well knew how to compoſe. This public homage was at once an honour to la Mothe, to women, and to letters.

I ſhall ſay nothing of the other women

* We know that in their diſpute about Homer, he ſhewed all the wit and the graces of a woman, while ſhe there ſhewed all the erudition, and ſometimes a little of the exceſs of ſtrength of a man.

who writ nearly at the ſame time. This catalogue is to be found every where; beſides, I ſpeak here only of women whoſe ſpirit and wit had a character, and who can ſerve to give us a knowledge of the ideas, or the manners of the ages in which they lived; they here form a picture, not a hiſtory.

The manners and general character of the women in the reign of Lewis XIV. produced a voluptuouſneſs united with decency, activity turned towards intrigue, little knowledge, a great deal of the art of pleaſing, a finiſhed politeneſs, a remnant of power over the men, a reſpect for all the religious ideas, which was mixed with this coquetry of manners; and repentance always accompanied or followed an amour.

The laſt years of the reign of Lewis XIV. had ſpread over the court, and over part of the nation, a certain ſerioufneſs and melancholy; the inclinations at

bottom continued the ſame, only they were more reſtrained.

But under the regency, there was an alteration in the manners and ideas; a new court changes every thing. An immorality leſs decent became the mode; they added audaciouſneſs and impetuoſity to their deſires, and tore off a part of the veil which before had covered gallantry. Decency, which uſed to be reſpected as a duty, was not then retained even as a pleaſure; the ſexes reciprocally diſpenſed with ſhame; folly was joined with the exceſſes, and both together formed a corruption at once profound and frivolous. And, that they might not bluſh for any thing, they adopted the mode of laughing at every thing.

The violent changes in fortunes precipitated this alteration, extreme miſery and extreme luxury were the conſequences, and their influence is well known. Seldom does there happen amongſt any people a ſudden ſhock in property,

property, without a rapid alteration in manners.

For more than ſix hundred years, gallantry had been the characteriſtic of the nation, but the ſpirit of chivalry had been always joined with it; that ſpirit, inſeparable from honor, was the cauſe that gallantry at leaſt bore the reſemblance of love, and that vice had all the virtue of which vice is ſuſceptible. But when there remained but few traces of that antique honor in the nation, gallantry was left without its ornament; and became a vile ſentiment, which allows of or gives birth to every weakneſs *.

In the mean time, through that gene-

* The ſpirit of chivalry had a long time ſurvived the cuſtoms, the laws, the inſtitutions, and even the ſpecies of government which gave birth to it. We ſtill ſee its image marked in the firſt works of the age of Lewis the Fourteenth, and in the firſt feaſts which he gave to his Court. There is no doubt but that this ſpirit prolonged the manners.

ral inclination which drew every one, the taſte for the ſociety of women increaſed; ſeduction being become more eaſy, offered every where greater hopes. The men lived leſs together; the women, grown leſs timid, accuſtomed themſelves to ſhake off a reſtraint which did them honour; the two ſexes changed natures; the one ſet too great a value upon the arts of pleaſing, the other upon independence.

As they grew more deſirous to become men of ſociety than citizens, they entered much more into the world. The young men, ſpoiled by the women, joined together the defects of their youth and the inſolence of their ſucceſs; having in general ſtrong paſſions and few ideas; empty heads and warm hearts; either inconſtant through vanity, or multiplying their deſires thro' inward diſſatisfaction and love of diſſipation, they ſet little value upon opinion, which for them exiſted no more,

and

and communicated to a great number of women their vices and their irregularities.

In this ſtate of mind, the burden of time, and the deſire of pleaſing, muſt more and more increaſe the love of ſociety; and by degrees arrive at the point when this ſociability is carried to exceſs; by mixing every body, it finiſhes by ſpoiling every body; and this is, perhaps, the epoch at which we are arrived.

Amongſt a people with whom the ſpirit of ſociety is carried to ſuch a length, domeſtic life is no more known; therefore, all thoſe natural ſentiments which ſpring up in retirement, and which grow in ſilence, muſt be weakened. The women learn to neglect the duties of wives and mothers.

The prejudices are ſtill more influenced by the manners, than the manners are by the prejudices. We regard

fidelity in the married ſtate as ſuitable only to the common people; we leave it to the good ſort of people to make ſacrifices to friendſhip; the enthuſiaſm of love we reſign to the Paladins. Theſe ſentiments are thought too excluſive; what purpoſe do they anſwer? But to confine to one, that which ought to be extended to all.

The more the general line extends itſelf, the more the particular lines relax. Thoſe who appear attached to all the world, are in reality attached to no one. Thus diſſimulation encreaſes. The leſs they feel, the more they pretend to feel.

By a ridiculous contraſt, the world is in extaſy with the word affection, at the ſame time that all true and profound affection is an object of ridicule.

Perhaps people think, that what they do not feel themſelves, does not exiſt, or perhaps they do themſelves ſo much juſtice

juſtice as to believe that they have no right to a real affection, and thoſe who give it, in the room of appearing ſincere, appear only the greater dupes.

Never had the word romantic a greater right to be the mode, becauſe it doubly ſatisfies vanity. It helps us to ridicule thoſe virtues which we have not; it prevents us from bluſhing for the vices or weakneſſes which we have. It makes us, beſide, vaſtly contented with our own underſtanding and knowledge. By applying the word romantic to all thoſe qualities we have not merit enough to attain, we make ourſelves believe, that we know the true value of every thing, and are ſuperiorly ſenſible of what man is, and what he ought to be.

In this ſtate we are led to talk very much of pleaſure, but we feel it not. The ſoul precipitates herſelf upon objects, when ſhe ought to keep at a cer-

tain diſtance. Our imagination grows languid, becauſe it has nothing new to create. Our minds are no longer open to the ſweet illuſions of fancy.

This vacancy which we feel in ourſelves, and the want of energy in the ſoul, have given birth to what we call amuſements; a word for cold tempers and light minds; a word which is become important, and which ought to be ridiculous through the ſerious light in which it is uſed; a word which intimates that we have nothing more to do with virtue, nor perhaps with ſenſe.

This amuſement, this inconceivable ſomething, which has no connexion with the imagination, with the underſtanding, nor with the heart, and which conſiſts but of forms, being now the only point in view, it engages the attention of every one.

In thoſe who are agreeable, we ſuppoſe virtues, or we pardon vice. There are few who have any longer the hardineſs to

deſpiſe

deſpiſe what is baſe, when that which is baſe is accompanied with grace.

The mind turns itſelf only to little things; the heart contracts itſelf, and employs itſelf in trifles; to pleaſe, or not to pleaſe, are become the principal words in the language.

Amongſt thoſe who are conſtantly in public, one would ſuppoſe that their ſelf-love, by its being more irritated, would be more active; but the ſame taſte for ſociety which irritates people's ſelf-love, teaches them to conceal it; it ſtifles itſelf, and grows up again; they let the ſecret eſcape by halves, and recover it again.

Society is a field where each perſon endeavours to overcome without the appearance of a ſtruggle, and where every one diſguiſe their efforts, that their pretenſions to ſuperiority may not be ſcrutinized.

All this together muſt inſpire in both ſexes an unquiet frivolity, and an active and ſerious vanity.

But the ſtrongeſt characteriſtical mark of the manners is the paſſion for being ſeen, the art of ſacrificing every thing to appearances, of giving great importance to trifling duties, and ſetting great value upon trifling ſucceſſes.

This ſociety teaches people to talk gravely upon he follies of yeſterday and of to-morrow, It, in ſhort, gives the mind and the heart a cold activity, which enables them to regard a thouſand objects without being intereſted about any one, and gives movement without giving a motive.

But if the taſte for letters, and the management of the underſtanding, are united in the ſame age with this active ſpirit of ſociety, from this mixture there muſt reſult other effects: there muſt then reign a general deſire in every one to appear inſtructed, while few devote time ſufficient to be really ſo.

From hence there muſt ariſe crowds of

the half-learned, who eagerly catch at the philoſophical ideas which men of genius ſend out from their retirement; they introduce them in the circles, they repeat them, they diſpute upon them.

The paſſion for ſociety, and the taſte for letters, being thus united, muſt change the mode of talking ſeriouſly upon trifling ſubjects, into the mode of trifling with profound ones. There muſt be forms of underſtanding ready made, and artificial memories for thoſe who have not natural ones.

From hence comes the eſtabliſhment of ſocieties, and their fall; pretenſions of every ſpecies, and every character; pretenſions to intrepidity; pretenſions to gravity and loftineſs; pretenſions to circumſpection and reſerve; an eagerneſs to obtain reputation, which ſome few endeavour to deſerve, many more uſurp it. In ſhort, intrigue, management, little cares, the art of giving praiſe

in order to receive praiſe; the art of joining another's merit to one's own, and of obtaining a name, either by one's ſelf or by others.

As the general maſs of knowledge is greater, and as by movement it communicates itſelf every where, the women, without giving themſelves any trouble, muſt become in ſome degree more inſtructed. But, faithful to their plan, they only ſeek for knowledge as an ornament to their wit; they learn with a deſire rather to pleaſe than to know, and to amuſe others rather than to inſtruct themſelves.

Beſides, in a ſtate of ſociety where there is a rapid movement, and an eternal ſucceſſion of books, and of ideas, the women, being employed in following this picture, which changes and flies around them perpetually, muſt, upon every ſubject, be better acquainted with the idea of the preſent moment, than with the ideas of all times; better with the preſent

ſent opinions, than with thoſe upon which they ought to form themſelves. They muſt therefore know the language of the arts better than their principles, and poſſeſs more particular ideas than ſyſtems of knowledge.

It appears to me, that in the ſixteenth century, the women inſtructed themſelves out of enthuſiaſm for learning itſelf. It was in them a profound affection, which aroſe from the ſpirit of the times, and nouriſhed itſelf even in ſolitude. In this age it is leſs a real affection, than a coquetry of the mind; and their enthuſiaſm for learning, as for all other objects, is a luxury more in repreſentation than in riches.

For the ſame reaſons, there were in thoſe days a greater number of women who had the courage to write. But when is it they have occaſion for this merit? Homage comes to them unſought; the enjoyment of every moment compenſates them for the want of that glory

glory which makes them live where they are not. With them each day finiſhes the pretenſions of the day. A thouſand intereſts mix themſelves with the intereſt of their underſtanding; their ideas fly to one object, and paſs as rapidly to another; they are drawn by the general movement.

Beſides, a mind which has its natural graces, is never in its full force but when at perfect liberty. The gift of pleaſing embelliſhes every thing: but the mind, content with its ſucceſs, and timid by ſucceſs itſelf, prefers an exiſtence in opinion to a real exiſtence, and fears to meaſure the extent of its powers. *

It would be curious, in the mean time, to examine what muſt naturally, amongſt

* It is not but that in this age there are women who have writ, and who ſtill write with diſtinction; and they are known: but their number diminiſhes every day, and there are infinitely fewer than there were at the revival of letters, and even in the reign of Lewis the Fourteenth.

us,

us, be the conſequences of all this jumble of movement and ideas, of frivolity and genius, of philoſophy in the head and liberty in the manners.

It would be curious to compare the preſent character of women with the character they have had in all the different epochs: to compare the character of French women, with the timid reſerve and the ſweet modeſty of the women in England; with the mixture of devotion and libertiniſm of thoſe in Italy; with their ardent imagination and their jealous ſenſibility in Spain; their profound retirement in China; and the barriers which, during four thouſand years, have ſeparated the women of that country from the eyes of men; laſtly, with the character and the manners which muſt ariſe in reſpect to women, from their confinement throughout almoſt all Aſia, where numbers exiſting but for one man, can neither improve their underſtanding or their reaſon; where they are deſtined to have

have only ſenſes; and are forced, by the abſurdity of their ſituation, to join modeſty with libertiniſm, and coquetry with retirement. But it is unneceſſary to draw this parallel; the contraſt in manners evinces itſelf, by ſhewing the difference of ſituations.

I ſhall only obſerve, that in this age, there are fewer encomiums upon the ſex than ever; the ſolemn dignity of funeral panegyrics is now reſerved almoſt entirely for women who either have occupied, or have been deſtined to occupy thrones.

The philoſophical orators celebrate only what is uſeful to humanity in general, or to nations; and the poets ſeem to have loſt that delicate gallantry which ſo long formed their character. They ſing of pleaſures more than love, and are more voluptuous than tender.

This general taſte for women, which is neither love, nor paſſion, nor even gallantry, but the effect of an habitude cold and

and forced, does not any where enliven either imagination or genius.

In the ſocieties formed by this eternal mixture of the ſexes, men learn to praiſe women leſs, becauſe they learn to be more ſevere. Self-love, the judge and rival, (ſometimes indulgent through pride, but almoſt always cruel through jealouſy) was never more vigilant to diſcover defects and to ſow ridicule. Praiſe is produced by enthuſiaſm, and never in any age was there leſs of it than in the preſent, though perhaps there is more of it affected. Enthuſiaſm ſprings up in a warm imagination, which creates objects in the room of ſeeing them. Now-a-days we ſee too much, and by dint of great light, we ſee all faintly.

Even vice is one of the pretenſions; we pretend to eſteem women leſs, becauſe we would wiſh to be thought to know them more. Every man has pride enough to prevent his believing their virtues;

virtues; and thoſe who would be impertinent, and cannot ſucceed in ſaying ill of them, often pride themſelves upon a ſatire, which, to compleat the abſurdity, they have no right to make. In reſpect to women, theſe are the conſequences of that general ſpirit of ſociety, which is their work, and which they do not ceaſe to value themſelves upon.

Women are like the ſovereigns of Aſia, who are never honoured but when they are little ſeen; by diſplaying themſelves too much before their ſubjects, they encourage them to revolt.

Nevertheleſs, in ſpite of our manners, and our eternal ſatires; in ſpite of our eagerneſs to be eſteemed without merit, and our ſtill greater eagerneſs to find nothing worthy of eſtimation, there are at this time, and even in this capital, women who would have honored a more virtuous age than ours. Many, who join an underſtanding truly cultivated to a ſtrong

ſtrong mind, and who, by their virtues, heighten their ideas of courage and honor. There are thoſe who can think with Monteſquieu, and who love to melt into tenderneſs with Fénelon.

In the midſt of opulence, and ſurrounded with that luxury which now-a-days makes it almoſt neceſſary to join avarice to pomp, and which renders the mind at once narrow, vain, and cruel, there are women who yearly ſeparate for the unfortunate a portion of their riches, who know the aſylums of miſery, and who there evince their tenderneſs by ſhedding tears.

There are affectionate wives, who, in the prime of youth and beauty, honor themſelves by their virtue, and in the ſweeteſt of all connections ſhew the raviſhing picture of innocence and love.

In fine, there are mothers who dare be mothers. In many houſes one ſees a beautiful woman occupied in the moſt tender cares in nature, and by turns preſſing

ing in her arms, or upon her breaſt, the infant whom ſhe nouriſhes with her milk; while the huſband in ſilence divides his tender attentions betwixt the mother and the child.

Oh! could but theſe examples reſtore amongſt us nature and morals; could we but learn how much virtue, in reſpect to happineſs, is ſuperior to pleaſures; how much a ſimple and eaſy life, in which one affects nothing, in which one exiſts but for one's ſelf and one's friends, and not for the regards of others; in which one by turns enjoys friendſhip, nature, and one's ſelf, is preferable to that turbulent unquiet life in which one runs for ever after delights which fly as we purſue! Ah! it is then that women would recover their empire; it is then that beauty, embelliſhed by virtue, would command mankind, happy to be enſlaved, and great in their weakneſs.

Then a pure and virtuous enjoyment, ſweetening every hour, would render life

life an enchanting dream. Then troubles would not be poiſoned by remorſe; and ſorrow, being ſoftened by love, and parted by friendſhip, would be rather a tender melancholy than a torment.

In this ſtate ſociety would be leſs active, it is certain, but the domeſtic life would be more ſweet. There would be leſs oſtentation and more pleaſure; leſs movement and more happineſs; we ſhould talk leſs of pleaſure, and we ſhould feel it more.

Then our days would paſs pure and tranquil; and if the evening did not produce the dull ſatisfaction of having, in the courſe of the day, acted the part of the moſt tender affection for thirty indifferent people, we ſhould have the more ſolid ſatisfaction of having lived with thoſe we love: we ſhould have helped to-morrow to a new charm, by the remembrance of to-day. Muſt this ſweet image then be only an illuſion?

and in this brilliant and vain ſociety is there no longer an aſylum for ſimplicity and happineſs?

As in every age there are ſome predominant virtues and vices, every age muſt have its peculiar ideas of female merit, and allow thoſe the greateſt ſhare, who poſſeſs moſt of the virtues, and avoid the defects, of the times in which they live.

After this, may we not venture to ſay, that the moſt eſtimable woman of the preſent age will be her who, while ſhe brings into the world all the charms of ſociety, that is to ſay, taſte, grace, and genius, knows at the ſame time how to guard her reaſon and her heart from that inſipid vanity, that falſe ſenſibility, the violent ſelf-love, and from all thoſe affectations which ſpring up from an inordinate love of ſociety: her who, againſt her inclinations, ſubmits to cuſtoms and uſages becauſe it is a neceſſary part of wiſdom, and does not in the

mean time loſe ſight of nature; but ſtill turns herſelf ſometimes towards reflections upon what is natural, at leaſt to honor it by her regrets.

Her who, while ſhe is drawn by the general movement, ſtill feels a deſire to repoſe herſelf from time to time in the arms of friendſhip; and who, while ſhe is forced by her condition to expence and luxury, chuſes at leaſt uſeful expences, and aſſiſts honeſt induſtrious indigence by her riches.

Her who, in cultivating philoſophy and letters, loves them for their own ſakes, and not for a vain and frivolous reputation; her who by the ſtudy of good books endeavours to enlighten her underſtanding by the knowledge of truth, to ſtrengthen her mind by principles; and leaves to others the jargon, the parade, and the words.

Her, in ſhort, who, in the midſt of ſo much lightneſs, dares to have a character;

racter; and who in the croud would preſerve a mind; who in the face of the world dares to acknowledge her friend, after having heard her calumniated; who dares to defend her when ſhe can never know it.

Her who will not careſs a worthleſs perſon, becauſe he happens to have credit and a name; but, at the hazard of diſpleaſing, determines, in her houſe and out of it, to preſerve her eſteem for virtue, her contempt for vice, her ſenſibility for friendſhip, and, in ſpite of the paſſion for having an extenſive ſociety, dares, even in the midſt of that ſociety, have the courage to publiſh a mode of thinking ſo extraordinary, and the ſtill greater courage to act up to it.

THE

THE two following Eſſays, which the Author had finiſhed before ſhe heard of the Eſſay by Monſ. THOMAS, ſhe here gives as a Supplement to the Tranſlation.

ESSAY I.

IT would, perhaps, be thought a paradox, were I to aſſert that women have naturally moſt power in thoſe countries where the laws relative to them are moſt rigid; and that, wherever legiſlators have moſt abridged their privileges, their power is moſt confeſſed.

In order to determine whether this aſſertion is true or not, let us take a ſlight view of the laws relative to the ſex amongſt people of different characters, and the cuſtoms which ſeem to throw a light upon the ſubject; and I believe it will appear, that women have ever been reſtrained, confined, and ſubjected to ſevere laws, in proportion to the great-

neſs of their natural power; and that they are, by the laws and uſages, encouraged and ſupported in proportion to their want of it.

From whence this natural power proceeds, and why it is greater in ſome countries than in others, we ſhall hereafter conſider.

Let us then take a view of the laws and cuſtoms of the Mahomedans in Aſia, reſpecting women, and the laws and manners relative to them amongſt the people of Holland.

A Mahomedan places his ſupreme delight in his ſeraglio; his riches are beſtowed in purchaſing women to fill it, and in proportion to his fortune, his females are beautiful and numerous. In women he places his chief amuſement, his luxury, his preſent happineſs, and future reward. But this violent fondneſs for the ſex, divided as it is betwixt many favorites, informs him that other men have the

the ſame violent paſſions: the beauties of his ſeraglio which delight him, he knows, would delight other men, could they obtain a ſight of them. Hence ariſes the ſtrict confinement of his women, the guards of eunuchs, and every poſſible bar to their being viſible to other men.

Except in the ſeraglio, they are not ſuppoſed to exiſt; for a Mahomedan never mentions his wives, and it would even excite his jealouſy, were they to be enquired after: and when he receives any new beauty into his houſe, the moſt profound ſecrecy is obſerved. But he does not confine his wives and female ſlaves becauſe he holds them in contempt; he guards their perſons as his moſt valuable treaſures.

This extreme uxorioufneſs of the men, is what gives the women their natural power over them; and the knowledge of this power, has cauſed the men

to eſtabliſh laws and cuſtoms, to prevent in ſome meaſure its effects.

Theſe laws prevent the women from having any ſhare in government, debar them from entering the moſques, from holding any lands, or enjoying any fortune independent of their huſbands or parents, and, in ſhort, give their huſbands an abſolute authority over them.

In Holland, on the contrary, where the men are of a phlegmatic diſpoſition, devoted to gain, enemies to luxury, prudent, ſelfiſh, and cold in their attachments to the ſex, the natural power of women muſt conſequently be ſmall; therefore, as there is little danger that the men will treat them with too much kindneſs, or be ſeduced by their allurements, the laws are calculated not to increaſe but to reſtrain the authority of huſbands, and the magiſtrates find it neceſſary to ſupport the women in the privileges the laws have given them, by great attention to their complaints.

Nevertheleſs,

Nevertheleſs, in ſpite of the ſeverity of the Mahomedan laws reſpecting women, and the lenity of the laws reſpecting them in Holland, it appears that there have been numbers of Mahomedans (even men on whom the fate of kingdoms has depended) who have given themſelves up to the entire direction of their female favorites: and it does not appear that Dutch huſbands give up their intereſt through the influence of their wives.

The manners of Mahomedan women, and the manners of Dutch women, are no leſs different than the laws by which they are governed: and in both, the difference ariſes from the ſame cauſes.

As a Muſſulman procures wives and female ſlaves for his pleaſures only, nothing is expected in them but youth and beauty, or at moſt, the arts of ſinging and dancing; they are too precious to be fatigued by cares. As their buſineſs is only to pleaſe, they bathe, per-

ſume, and attire themſelves in the moſt expenſive dreſſes, practiſe the moſt becoming attitudes, and throw their eyes with the moſt bewitching languiſhment; are feeble and indolent in their youth; and old-age, which comes upon women early in their climate, is ſpent in jealouſy of their more youthful rivals.

But, as a Dutch woman is expected to ſerve, ſhe attends to buſineſs, and neglects her perſon; is inelegant and robuſt; her laughs are hearty, and her expreſſions coarſe; becauſe, as a Dutchman deſires in his wife an aſſiſtant, a ſteward, a partner in his cares, ſhe can only expect to be valued in proportion to her uſefulneſs and œconomy; therefore, as the Mahomedan women are examples of the moſt extreme indolence, the Dutch women are remarkable for their application to buſineſs, whereby they become of conſequence in themſelves, as well as uſeful to their huſbands intereſt; not only

only by their domeſtic œconomy, but by their knowledge in traffic, ſo much that the wife is very often both the aſſiſtant and the director of her huſband's affairs; and many unmarried women are very conſiderable merchants.

But although many of them, by their induſtry and application to buſineſs, gain a degree of conſequence, it is a conſequence independent of their ſex. It is not the woman, but the merchant, who is conſidered.

The women in Holland are under very little reſtraint, becauſe the Dutch are unacquainted with that jealouſy which torments a Muſſulman, and can, without any uneaſineſs, ſee their wives, carrying on buſineſs, and ſtriking bargains with the greateſt ſtrangers.

In contraſt to the myſterious ſecrecy with which a female is uſhered into a ſeraglio, the marriages of the Dutch are proclaimed long before they take place; and

and their courtſhips are carried on even without that reſerve and delicacy obſerved in the politer nations of Europe.

In ſpeaking of Holland, we muſt be underſtood to mean the bulk of the nation; for the few people of rank are imitators of the French manners: but even amongſt theſe the national character is viſible.

It is unneceſſary in this place to conſider the influence which the Chriſtian or Mahomedan religion have over the manners. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that the cauſes we have inſtanced, added to the difference of climate, which naturally produces indolence or activity, in proportion to its heat or temperance, have given to the Mahomedan women of Aſia, and the women of Holland, characters as different as their perſons, although the firſt are black and the latter white; and that their characters are even more different than the characters of men and women in ſome countries.

I have

I have choſen to inſtance Holland in preference to the more northern nations, not that the natural power of women is greater in theſe, (on the contrary, it is rather leſs) but becauſe theſe countries, being almoſt uncivilized, their manners can ſcarcely be delineated; for even in Ruſſia, where the greateſt efforts have been made to poliſh and inform the natives, decorum and decency are ſtill ſtruggling with the ancient barbarity, and the manners are unfixed.

ESSAY

ESSAY II.

THE Roman women were under the perpetual guardianſhip of their fathers, huſbands, or the neareſt male relation; but, as this is not the caſe in England, thoſe who pretend that women have little occaſion for reflection or knowledge, becauſe they are always under the direction of their parents or huſbands, have ſurely never looked around them, to obſerve the number who are in the prime of life, and even the bloom of youth, without either parent, huſband, or any male relation to whom obedience is due. This is the caſe with moſt unmarried women who have loſt their parents; what muſt be the fate of ſuch, if

if folly and ignorance are to be their guide ?

A widow who has children, ought to unite the inſtruction and authority of a father, with the tenderneſs of a mother ; and this is a taſk which even the beſt intentions, unaſſiſted by knowledge, will not enable her to perform.

But I will not dwell upon this ſituation, difficult as it is, becauſe there is another, to which the tender ſex is liable, which is attended with every inconvenience of widowhood, with the addition of ſo many others, that a woman who acquits herſelf in it as ſhe ought, muſt practiſe virtues, which although not the moſt ſhining, are perhaps of all virtues the moſt difficult to perſevere in.

This is the ſituation of a woman, when her huſband, the father of her children, (who ought to be the guardian, the protector, the director, and comfort of both her and them) is ſunk in debauchery ; who, inſtead of forming the growing

minds of his offspring to virtue, and providing for their fortunes, diſſipates their ſubſtance, and ſets them every example of vice. Ill-humour to a wife is the conſtant attendant on a vicious man: if he adds to this the brutality of encouraging his children in diſobedience, her ſorrow and her difficulty are then complete.

What an exceſs of tenderneſs muſt ſhe practiſe, to engage the affections of her children! with what prudence muſt ſhe temper that tenderneſs, to gain their eſteem! with what reſolution ſhe muſt puniſh their faults, with what addreſs ſhe muſt ſhew them the neceſſity of ſuch puniſhment!

How difficult to teach them to reverence the parent, whoſe vices ſhe muſt teach them to abhor; to conceal her diſtreſſes from an inquiſitive and malicious world; to receive the man who cauſes them with kindneſs; to guard againſt every look or word, which the

conſciouſneſs of his own unworthineſs may lead him to underſtand as a reproach! Is woman capable of ſuch greatneſs? will a modiſh education inſpire her with ſuch virtue? The dancing-maſter, the muſic-maſter, or the maſter of languages will not teach her it. Can ſhe learn it at the opera, at concerts, or the gaming-table? Surely no!

Her own reflections in retirement only can furniſh her with ſuch fortitude. It is there ſhe muſt commune with her own heart, and conſider the vanity of faſhion, the danger of vice, the ſhortneſs of human life, and the bleſſings of a conſcience void of offence.

I think I ſee her kneeling before her Maker, with humble piety beſeeching his merciful aſſiſtance to ſupport her in her afflictions; her ſoul is lifted up to heaven; ſhe regards her ſufferings as trials of her virtue, and experiences that even the tears of the virtuous are ſweeter than the pleaſures of vice, and a conſciouſneſs

ouſneſs of having performed her duty, than the flattery of the world, as the dignity of her own mind is more valuable than the grandeur of it.

The gay may laugh at this picture, but it is not the reſult of enthuſiaſm. Look around the world, and ſee; are there not ſuch ſituations? and, ſpite of the prevalence of faſhion, ſpite of the badneſs of education, there are ſuch women.

And where is the man who can pretend to boaſt of greater merit?

FINIS.